The Making of Salafism

Religion, Culture, and Public Life

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Religion, Culture, and Public Life

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ISLAMIC REFORM
IN THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Henri Lauzière

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Introduction

A few years ago Professor Benjamin Braude of the history department at Boston College shared with me the memory of an event that took place at Harvard University in fall 1965. During an undergraduate tutorial on Middle Eastern history with distinguished historian L. Carl Brown, Braude and his fellow classmates were discussing Albert Hourani's now famous book *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*—perhaps the most widely read book on modern Islamic reformers in a European language. In the course of their discussion, Brown asked the class about the *salafiyya* movement, or Salafism. The question prompted blank looks from the students. Brown was surprised that, despite reading Hourani's masterpiece, they did not know the term. How could they have missed it? At that point, they pulled out the text and went through it. As it turned out, the term *salafiyya* was not listed in the index and seemed absent from the book as a whole. The students felt reassured, but Brown was puzzled. He had come to think of *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* as a monograph dealing with *salafiyya* and was so convinced of the centrality of this notion to Hourani's work that he had failed to notice this was not the case. It never occurred to him that the book might not conform to his conceptual expectations. Undeterred by the absence of the term, Brown proceeded to rectify Hourani's omission. When the discussion resumed, he explained that *salafiyya* was the name by which the Muslim reformers of the late

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nineteenth and early twentieth centuries referred to their movement of Islamic modernism.

This anecdote encapsulates many of the problems with which the present book wrestles: how presumptions about Salafism influence our reading of both primary and secondary sources, how deeply ingrained these presumptions are, and how easily they can dictate and even distort our interpretation of history. Despite their naïveté, or rather because of it, Brown's students proved impervious to the pressure of preconceived ideas. Because they had not been conditioned by prevailing assumptions about Salafism, they had no reason to use a concept found nowhere in the reading. Their silence was the best answer. And yet, like countless other students throughout the world, they were taught to superimpose this concept on the history of Islamic thought without truly questioning its provenance or authenticity.

The problem outlined here still exists today, and it is compounded by the fact that another, decidedly nonmodernist version of *salafiyya* is also presumed to be valid and is also projected back onto earlier sources. From there, the difficulties become exponentially worse with the use of the term *Salafism* in discussions about different historical periods and various locales. It is no wonder, then, that defining Salafism as a particular form of Islam is a contentious enterprise. To make matters even worse, the discussion is not restricted to scholars of religion who are attempting to establish a coherent analytical vocabulary. It also involves Muslim religious scholars (ʿulama) and activists who disagree among themselves and for whom the very notion of Salafism represents either a disruptive innovation or a nearly sacrosanct concept.[1] All of this makes for a complicated debate. How does one even begin to think about Salafism, let alone introduce it to the uninitiated?

One might think that the first step toward clarity would be to ask "What is Salafism?"—as the title of one edited volume has done.[2] But for all its straightforwardness, this question is the wrong one to ask if we want to get to the root of the problem. Given the current state of knowledge, even the most cautious definitions of Salafism cannot resolve the deep-seated confusion surrounding the meaning and historical origins of this concept. They can only acknowledge or ignore this confusion to various degrees. Such definitions may suggest that Salafism has never been monolithic or that it is a catchword for a variety of different meanings, but in doing so,

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they are perpetuating the presumptions and ambiguities that have characterized the concept for nearly a hundred years. It is precisely these presumptions that we need to challenge and these ambiguities that we need to unpack and resolve.

From a historian's perspective, this maelstrom of meanings and conflicting views is of particular concern. The reason is simple: because virtually all arguments about the meaning of Salafism are rooted in historical claims, these arguments, in turn, tend to determine and structure our understanding of Islamic intellectual history. Indeed, Salafism—however defined—is often much more than a descriptive term. It serves as a prism that allows scholars to organize the messiness of history—that is, to make connections or distinctions between historical figures, to offer periodization schemes, and, basically, to tell the story of Islamic thought. In short, Salafism renders the past legible, and it is this subtle but problematic interplay between conceptual constructions and historical narratives that the present book seeks to address.

At the heart of my approach, therefore, lies a methodological reversal. Instead of accepting Salafism as a historical given and using it as a heuristic device for making sense of the past, I do the opposite. I examine the historical process by which various intellectuals came to shape and defend the concept of Salafism in ways that we now take for granted. My goal is to cut through layers of scholarly conventions in order to clear the ground for a reassessment of the history of modern Islamic thought. Although I recognize that there is more than one coherent understanding of Salafism, my focus on the conceptualization process reveals the presence of cumulative errors and hasty judgments in the scholarship. By freeing the discussion on Salafism from received ideas and fragile assumptions and by tracing how the concept developed and under which circumstances certain acceptations of it took hold, I ultimately intend to revisit the history of Islamic reform in the twentieth century.

My overall argument has two parts. In a nutshell, the first, "deconstructive" part of my argument is that the existing narratives of Salafism used by both historians of Salafism and Salafi authors are to varying degrees mythical. Their acceptance as tools for understanding the evolution of Islamic thought has produced skewed and even erroneous views of intellectual history. It is as if scholars have been navigating and mapping the past with instruments that, unbeknownst to them, are unreliable. I will

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thus first make a case for the reconsideration of these mythical narratives. However, because my full argument cannot be understood without background information on the nature and scope of the problem, I will wait to state the second part of my argument—the "constructive" one—until the end of this introduction.

The Modernist and Purist Versions of Salafism

My point of departure is a long-standing puzzle in the study of Islamic thought—namely, the existence of two different narratives and characterizations of Salafism that are said to be based on uncontested truths. Etymologically, they are identical in that they share a name that derives from the Arabic word for "ancestors" (*salaf*), but they are quite different in substance. This puzzle is not merely the result of subjective disagreements among scholars who choose to interpret the same concept differently. On the contrary, much of the confusion stems from the fact that these two incongruent and, to some extent, contradictory conceptions of Salafism appear to be beyond question. Through a self-perpetuating process, they have both become embedded in the literature on modern Islam and have, therefore, acquired an aura of objectivity—something that has no doubt constrained historians' imagination as well as the range of possible questions they might pose and conclusions they might draw about the meaning and history of Salafism. Thus, the problem is as much a product of the historiography as it is a consequence of the belief that this historiography is objectively grounded.

The first paradigmatic conception of Salafism found in the literature—I shall call it *modernist Salafism*—remains a key tool in the conceptual repertoire of the social sciences and humanities. Although it has become less relevant for the study of contemporary Islam, many scholars and activists in various parts of the world continue to identify the term *salafiyya* (translated as "Salafism") as a multifaceted movement of Islamic modernism that took shape in the late nineteenth century and lasted until the mid-twentieth century. The idea that Muslim luminaries such Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897), Muhammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905), and Rashid Rida (d. 1935) either founded or spearheaded a movement of reform called *salafiyya* remains one of the building blocks of modern Islamic studies and a

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staple of textbooks on Middle Eastern history.[3] Their Salafism, we are told, sought to reconcile Islam with the social, political, and intellectual ideals of the Enlightenment. Like the Roman Catholic modernists of western Europe during the same time period, these modernist Salafis were a relatively small group of loosely affiliated reformers who strove to rearticulate their religion in terms that were more relevant to contemporary realities and more intelligible and appealing to the rational minds of the educated elite. They saw the pious ancestors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) as paragons of ingenuity and adaptability whose example would allow modern Muslims to emancipate themselves from the shackles of tradition and join the march of civilizational progress. As a result, these Salafis emphasized the use of reason to show that Islam was in tune with the requirements of the modern age.

Until their gradual demise, exponents of this so-called modernist Salafism developed a broad set of reformist ideas in hopes of revitalizing the religious, social, political, and educational institutions of Muslim societies. A host of themes and issues—ranging from the defense of women's rights to pan-Islamism, the promotion of representative government, and the teaching of modern science—is thus considered typical of modernist Salafi discourse. What distinguished these reformers from other advocates of change, however, was their moderate, balanced (*muʿtadil*) approach. Modernist Salafis, it is argued, were committed to Islam and its formative texts—but not in a way that condoned stagnancy. Likewise, they were committed to renewal and reform along modern lines—but not in a way that could undermine the strength and relevance of Islam in the modern era. Theirs was a middle-of-the-road position.[4]

Some historians have downplayed the importance of al-Afghani and ʿAbduh in order to highlight the contributions of other Muslim scholars—especially from Iraq and Syria—in the shaping of Salafism. Nevertheless, their revisionist arguments remain rooted in the premises of the existing paradigm and still proceed from the assumption that *salafiyya* existed as a distinct concept in the nineteenth century and that, to some extent, it denoted a progressive movement of reform.[5] For many scholars, these are established facts supported by a combination of textual proof and scholarly consensus. A closer look at primary sources, however, will show that these premises are mistaken. The above discussion is valid insofar as it accurately characterizes a modernist approach to Islamic reform, which

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a number of Muslim scholars and activists did promote at the end of the nineteenth century. What is invalid is the deeply ingrained belief that Muslims at the time used the words *Salafism* and *Salafi* to designate this reformist movement in all of its aspects. Despite its weak empirical foundation, this belief has given rise to sterile debates and continues to engender confusion. I shall return to the question of the validity, or lack thereof, of modernist Salafism as a category. For now, it suffices to say that the matter is not as simple as the secondary literature would have us believe. Just as it is easy to assume that Hourani spoke of *salafiyya* in his *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, it is easy to assume that al-Afghani and ʿAbduh spoke of Salafism in their own writings and referred to themselves as Salafis. Yet they never did.

The second paradigmatic conception of Salafism—which I will call *purist Salafism*—is far more widespread today and requires a longer presentation.[6] A greater number of academics and the vast majority of today's self-proclaimed Salafis worldwide define *salafiyya* (again translated as "Salafism") as the most authentic and purist religious orientation within Sunni Islam. Here, the adjective *purist* does not entail any normative or moral judgment on my part. It is meant only to convey the persistent preoccupation of today's Salafis with religious purity, which they seek to embody. Purist Salafis have indeed placed themselves at the center of intra-Islamic polemics because of their claim to follow the only true Islam that can lead to salvation. To many of its detractors, this form of Salafism is virtually synonymous with Wahhabism—the conservative approach to Islam that prevails in Saudi Arabia and that was first expounded by Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab in the eighteenth century. But purist Salafis have long denied this characterization, both because they abhor the term *Wahhabism* and because they reject the idea that Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab created a new religious orientation. Salafism, they argue, is nothing other than Islam as it was first revealed, unsullied by any innovation (*bidʿa*), deviation (*inḥirāf*), or accretion (*ziyāda*) and uncontaminated by exogenous influences. It is the pure Islam to which the pious ancestors of the first three generations conformed.[7]

But given the difficulty of defining purity in absolute terms, contemporary Salafis often must define it negatively—that is, by elaborating on all the things they deem contrary to the pristine Islam of the pious ancestors. In matters of creed, which they view as the highest priority, purist

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Salafis reject all forms of speculative theology, known as *kalām* in Arabic. According to them, Muslims who seek to explain thorny issues such as God's names and attributes should never resort to philosophy, Aristotelian logic, or metaphorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*), all of which distort the meaning of the scriptures. The pious ancestors, the argument goes, never used such devious techniques: they merely described God as He described Himself in the revelation. In order to revive this "originalist" approach to theology, purist Salafis insist on the need to avoid nearly every theological doctrine that has emerged since the first *fitna*, or civil war, which split the Muslim community in the mid-seventh century. They find all of them—including the Ashʿari and Maturidi doctrines followed by millions of Muslims today—to be misguided, heretical, or offensive to God in one way or another.[8] In short, they regard these theological doctrines as reprehensible innovations that the pious ancestors either did not encounter or did not tolerate. The believers of the first three generations who accepted or propagated some of these beliefs were, therefore, not among the "pious" ancestors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) but rather were among the "vicious" ancestors (*al-salaf al-ṭāliḥ*), as one Moroccan activist put it.[9]

This leaves contemporary purist Salafis with only one reliable doctrinal system—Hanbali theology—to which they adhere in its later and more refined iteration, as articulated and defended by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328).[10] Yet unlike medieval Muslim scholars, contemporary Salafis usually refrain from claiming that they are Hanbali in creed because that could imply the blind following of a single man—namely, Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855)—who has no inherent authority. To speak of Hanbali theology could also imply that Ibn Hanbal and his disciples were innovators who constructed a doctrinal system more than two hundred years after the death of the Prophet. To avoid these potential objections, purist Salafis claim to follow the doctrine of the forefathers (*madhhab al-salaf*), thus enlisting the collective authority of all the pious ancestors in matters of theology. Ibn Taymiyya, the controversial medieval scholar, had made it a point to draw the distinction during one of his trials in Damascus in 1306. When asked to acknowledge that his writings conformed to the Hanbali creed—an admission that might have satisfied his judges and ended the trial—Ibn Taymiyya refused and retorted: "I compiled nothing but the creed of all the pious ancestors, and it is not particular to imam Ahmad [ibn Hanbal]. Imam Ahmad only transmitted the knowledge that the Prophet brought forth."[11]

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Contemporary Salafis also search for impurities beyond the realm of theology. In legal matters, they usually deny that the four Sunni schools of Islamic law have any authority apart from the canonical primary sources on which each body of jurisprudence is supposed to be based. In principle, few self-respecting Salafi scholars today would argue to the contrary, even if, in practice, they may tend to follow one school in particular.[12] Their rationale is that the schools of law and their institutionalization of disagreement did not exist at the time of the pious ancestors. Therefore, the cumulative legal precedents and methodologies of these schools should not carry more weight than the Qurʾan, the hadith, and the consensus of the *salaf*. Purist Salafis are particularly cautious not to let legal pluralism justify actions that could be construed as *shirk* (literally "association," by which they mean a breach of *tawḥīd*, or God's unicity) because in such cases the distinction between a wrong action and a wrong belief tends to disappear. Allowing Muslims to build structures over tombs and declaring it permissible to seek divine favor through the auspices of a deceased patron are examples of legal opinions that, according to purist Salafis, endorse idolatry. This is one of the many reasons why they abhor Sufism, which they view as a hotbed for such innovations in deeds and, ultimately, in creed.

The most uncompromising purist Salafis usually leave no stone unturned to locate and eradicate actual or potential impurities from all aspects of the religious experience. Not only do they reject what they regard as misguided beliefs and actions, but also they attack the epistemologies that enable these beliefs and actions to emerge in the first place. For this reason, they deny the validity of any intuitive or esoteric knowledge whose content is not accessible to all. Purist Salafis are equally adamant about the primacy of scriptural evidence (*naql*) over rational proofs (*ʿaql*) as the best means to arrive at the truth. Again, only the Qurʾan, the hadith, and the authenticated reports of pious ancestors who assimilated infallible prophetic teachings may yield certitude. Reason alone never does, and according to purist Salafis, it would be irrational to think otherwise.[13] They agree that one must appeal to reason, or common sense, to appreciate the superiority of sound transmitted knowledge. But Muslims are not at liberty to interpret textual sources as they please. Nor can they explain away the passages that do not suit their views and tastes. Failing to interpret the scriptures as the pious ancestors allegedly did (*ʿalā fahm al-salaf*) would be

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an innovation. It would open the door to relativism and could render one liable to accusations of unbelief (*kufr*).[14] According to some purist Salafis, a Muslim's deliberate failure to act on this proper understanding of the scriptures, even in matters of etiquette (such as shaving one's beard), could have similar consequences.[15] In that sense, purist Salafis raise the specter of heresy to a particularly high degree. Even Muslims who personally live up to Salafi standards of orthodoxy and orthopraxy could theoretically stray into heresy if they fail, or hesitate, to anathematize heretics.[16]

In the last twenty years or so, scholars and commentators of various backgrounds have further divided this purist conception of Salafism into several distinct subcategories, the most well known of which are *jihadist Salafism* (*al-salafiyya al-jihādiyya*) and quietist *scholarly Salafism* (*al-salafiyya al-ʿilmiyya*). These labels are intended to provide better tools for analysis, but it must be remembered that they are often imposed by outsiders. Moreover, they attempt to capture differences on questions pertaining to politics and the use of violence, which, although important, are not at the core of purist Salafism. By this, I mean, again, that purist Salafis tend to evaluate the soundness of all thoughts and actions—including those pertaining to politics and the use of violence—by standards of religious purity. Ultimately, it is not so much what Salafis do or say about politics and violence that matters as it is how well they can avoid or defend themselves against charges of epistemological, theological, and legal impurity. As a rule, the stronger the case is against them, the weaker their claim to Salafism becomes among their peers.

Purist Salafis often reject these subcategories precisely because subcategories belittle the unique character of Salafism as they understand it. From their perspective, there cannot be different types of Salafism, just as there cannot be premodern and modern versions of it. Rather, there can be only one authentic Salafism, handed down from generation to generation since the time of the pious ancestors. So although it is common for self-proclaimed Salafis to have disagreements and accuse one another of deviating from Salafism, they usually compete for the same label. This is why they are at times forced to use expressions such as "pure Salafism" (*al-salafiyya al-naqiyya*) and "true Salafism" (*al-salafiyya al-ṣaḥīḥa*) to make their point. Consider how a leading Salafi from Jordan argues that the notion of jihadist Salafism is nonsense: if a Salafi is someone who understands and practices true Islam and if true Islam encompasses all aspects

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of the religious experience—including the proper understanding and practice of armed struggle—then how could a group of Salafis lay claim to any special or superior position regarding jihad?[17]

As might be expected, purist Salafis apply the same logic to the so-called modernist Salafism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They refuse to recognize its validity as a parallel form of Salafism. Muqbil al-Wadiʿi (d. 2001), an important purist Salafi from Yemen, was perhaps the most influential and outspoken critic of al-Afghani and ʿAbduh, whom he accused of using misguided rationalism to corrupt true Islam. Al-Wadiʿi even targeted Rida, ʿAbduh's more scripturalist disciple, in an attempt to show how far he stood from the one and only form of Salafism worthy of the name.[18] We could say that the status of Rida and his work, unlike that of al-Afghani and ʿAbduh, is a matter of some contention among purist Salafis. But we cannot carry this too far, for Rida remained at heart an Islamic modernist or "balanced" reformer, to use his own expression. Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999), another towering figure of purist Salafism, was more lenient toward Rida and even approved of his Qurʾanic exegesis, though only in general terms. Yet he could not go much further in his praise and could not help but reproach Rida for his (sometimes) cavalier attitude toward hadith literature.[19]

Dealing with the Conundrum and Unlearning Old Assumptions

There is no denying the difference between the modernist and purist conceptions of Salafism outlined above. For the so-called modernist Salafis of the past, the importance of reason and progress, broadly conceived, justified bold reforms in many different areas and often superseded the fear of religious innovation to some extent. When I met the Moroccan *homme de lettres* ʿAbd al-Karim Ghallab in Rabat in 2005, he described his former mentor, ʿAllal al-Fasi (d. 1974), as a follower of "progressive Salafism [*al-salafiyya al-taqaddumiyya*]" along the lines of ʿAbduh's reformism. According to Ghallab, al-Fasi believed that Salafism consisted not in replicating the practices of the *salaf* and doing everything as they did but in *thinking* as they did—that is, by facing religious, social, and political challenges with an open mind.[20] The approach of the modernist Salafis was, therefore,

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quite at odds with that of today's Salafis, for whom religious purity usually comes first and often supersedes the apparent demands of modernity. As a telling indication of their wariness of false progress, contemporary purist Salafis usually begin their books and speeches with the words of a hadith that has the Prophet saying "Every innovation is a misguidance and every misguidance leads to hellfire [*kull bidʿa ḍalāla wa kull ḍalāla fī-l-nār*]."[21] It is critical to note, however, that they are primarily concerned with *religious* innovation, hence their desire to shield Islam from the philosophical dimension of Western modernity, which they see as an un-Islamic and corrupting influence. They have come to consider technological innovation to be less problematic, especially when it helps to sustain or promote Salafi Islam.[22]

The incongruity between these two paradigmatic conceptions of Salafism goes beyond questions of what each concept means and what kind of religiosity each denotes. There is also a chronological discrepancy. Even though the majority of today's purist Salafis insist that Salafism began with the revelation itself, they concede that the first Muslims did not use the term *salafiyya*, if only because there was no need for it at the time. The term did not emerge until later, they argue, when the rapid growth of the *umma* (the worldwide Muslim community) caused innovations and sectarian divisions to arise, thus forcing purist Muslims to adopt a distinctive term to refer to true Islam.[23] Implicitly or explicitly, their argument is that Salafism emerged as a term sometime during the ʿAbbasid era.[24] Although this claim is misleading, as we shall see later, a few primary sources do indeed prove that adherents to Hanbali theology used the word *Salafi* to describe themselves from the twelfth century onward, and perhaps as early as the tenth if some later reports are accurate. As a result, some academics in the West also suggest that medieval Muslims either articulated a Salafi brand of Islam or used the concept of Salafism that is now so familiar to us.[25] Leaving aside for the moment the issue of the soundness of this approach, one can see that it forms the basis of a narrative of origins that challenges scholarship on modernist Salafism. More specifically, it contradicts the claim that *salafiyya* is a label that emerged in the nineteenth century to designate an Islamic modernist movement.

Across all disciplines, scholars interested in Salafism have struggled with the existence of these conflicting claims about the meaning and history of *salafiyya*. How can two presumably valid versions of the same

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concept seem so irreconcilable? Whereas some have chosen to ignore the matter or leave it unresolved, others have, quite understandably, tried to solve the contradiction through various means. As Thomas Kühn notes in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, "awareness of anomaly opens a period in which conceptual categories are adjusted until the initially anomalous has become the anticipated."[26] In the case of Salafism, scholars have devised three main coping mechanisms that are not mutually exclusive. Although they are used in good faith, these mechanisms must be seen for what they are: strategic interpretive adjustments intended to justify much of what we think we already know about Salafism, whether from a modernist or a purist perspective. None of them entertains the possibility that existing narratives might be wrong.

The first mechanism consists in positing the existence of parallel and at times unrelated strands of Salafism throughout history, thereby circumventing the problem of conflicting narratives by assuming that the same word—*salafiyya*—had different meanings and referred to different types of Islamic movements at different times.[27] Despite its seeming cogency, however, this hypothesis has little empirical support. The criteria used for asserting the existence of something called Salafism in different historical eras are either loose or dictated by current scholarly needs and assumptions. Little attention is paid to primary sources and whether they truly validate the use of *salafiyya* as an analytical category. Even less attention is paid to the question of how, or even if, past Salafis defined the term. As a result, this coping mechanism not only allows all preexisting narratives of Salafism to coexist but also even makes room for new ones.[28] Conjuring up additional strands of Salafism may be convenient, but it is not the most historically sound way to account for the differences between individuals and ideas.

The second mechanism is to remold or at least broaden the category of Salafism so as to include a wide variety of seemingly conflicting definitions under its umbrella. According to this approach, the modernist and purist versions of Salafism can be reconciled because they share a number of common characteristics. But this interpretation of the concept ignores the specificity with which Salafis often define Salafism. It also tends to render the category irrelevant because the said common denominators (showing deference to the pious ancestors, going back to the Qurʾan and the Sunna, opposing blind imitation, etc.) are usually so general that any Muslim

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reformer of any theological persuasion and from any period in history could, in theory, be regarded as a Salafi.[29] It is one thing to acknowledge the confusion and lack of consensus about the meaning of Salafism in the secondary literature, but it is quite another to dilute the concept in order to make the problem seem soluble.

The third mechanism, to which I resorted until 2008, consists in presuming that the modernist Salafism of al-Afghani and ʿAbduh either evolved into or gave way to purist Salafism. At first glance, this appears to be a sensible and credible hypothesis, especially for scholars who are interested in the modern period and wonder why the notion of modernist Salafism virtually disappeared. (Today's "progressive" Muslims hardly ever dare to refer to themselves as Salafis.) Yet this approach remains a coping mechanism because all tentative explanations are based on default assumptions about modernist Salafism found in earlier scholarship.[30] In other words, the existence of modernist Salafism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as the meaning of the terms *salafī* and *salafiyya*, is always taken for granted. For example, some scholars claim that Wahhabis hijacked, borrowed, or received the label *Salafism* from modernist reformers in the early twentieth century, although such scholars always presume that the term *salafī* had a modernist connotation and never question whether *salafiyya* was indeed the slogan of modernist reformers.[31] Others hold Rida responsible for bringing modernist Salafism closer to Wahhabism, but they do not question whether modernist Salafism—the "thing" that allegedly underwent a transformation—is a historically valid construct to begin with.[32] If we fail to examine the uncertain foundations of our knowledge, to use Kant's imagery, we cannot hope to build a more solid historical edifice.

There are several other ways to try to reconcile the narratives of modernist and purist Salafism and many more ways to evade the question. But in the end, coping mechanisms never provide satisfactory answers to the problem of historical and conceptual incongruity because the problem runs deeper than what the secondary literature suggests. The only way forward is to recognize that the secondary literature is often part of the problem, not part of the solution. As long as we allow preconceptions and ready-made paradigms to determine the parameters of our historical investigations, we shall remain prisoners of our own mythologies. This is precisely why the question "What is Salafism?" cannot lead to a resolution

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of the matter. It is bound to lead to an impasse unless we first examine our own epistemological practices—that is, the way in which we write the history of ideas and the way in which we frame Salafism as an object of inquiry. Hence, a more fundamental set of preliminary questions ought to be asked: How exactly do we know what we think we know about Salafism? Why do we believe that certain features of Islam fall under that label?

Epistemological awareness is crucial not only because it allows one to maintain greater critical distance from secondary literature but also because it raises the issue of the criteria by which Salafism is to be identified in primary sources—a frustrating but essential issue that is too often overlooked. There are, of course, no absolute criteria for determining whether a source shows evidence of Salafism because it does not make sense to think of Salafism as a reified entity that is either "present" or "absent." Therefore, all scholars interested in the history of Salafism have the burden of choosing their own criteria, whether consciously or unconsciously. For reasons that I shall try to explain, I believe empirical criteria (e.g., the presence or absence of Salafi labels in primary sources) are more useful and preferable at this stage than normative criteria (e.g., whether primary texts correspond to scholarly definitions of what Salafism is supposed to mean). I agree with Quentin Skinner that "the surest sign that a group or society has entered into the self-conscious possession of a new concept is that a corresponding vocabulary will be developed, a vocabulary which can then be used to pick out and discuss the concept in question with consistency."[33] If we are to discuss a concept as controversial as Salafism, we might as well begin by taking a closer look at how Muslims themselves have used and defined the term.

The main problem with normative criteria is that they easily open the door to anachronism and self-fulfilling beliefs. The very act of defining Salafism in order to identify its alleged emergence and development is conducive to circular arguments, whereby the definition justifies the findings and the findings are deemed valid on the basis of the definition. Scholars who adopt the definition of Salafism as a modernist movement of scriptural reform, for example, often situate its emergence in the early 1880s, when ʿAbduh and al-Afghani burst onto the Arab intellectual scene with the publication of their seminal journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa*.[34] Likewise, historians of Syria claim that Salafism emerged in Damascus in the 1880s and 1890s, when a group of local religious scholars who fit the definition

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of modernist Salafis gained in visibility and influence.[35] To reach different historical conclusions, it suffices to either adopt a different definition of Salafism or keep the same definition but make the case that earlier (or later) thinkers better represent the core ideals of the Salafi movement. In the end, this methodology reveals far more about a researcher's own views—and the kind of secondary literature that he or she has read—than it does about the history of a concept known as Salafism that past Muslims might have been able to recognize and explicate.

But empirical criteria are not a panacea either. They can just as easily lead to ahistorical conclusions if they are not accompanied by an examination of one's own epistemology. Indeed, the mere presence of the Arabic words *salaf*, *salafī*, and *salafiyya* in primary sources is too often read as proof that a distinct Salafi movement or a self-evident concept of Salafism existed in the past. For example, a number of scholars have argued that the notion of *salafiyya* emerged in Iraq at the beginning of the nineteenth century in contradistinction to Wahhabism. This argument is based on two pieces of textual evidence, the most important of which is a lone passage from a book by the Baghdadi scholar Abu al-Thanaʾ al-Alusi (d. 1854).[36] In this passage, the author claims that his teacher, ʿAli al-Suwaydi (d. 1821), "did not blacken his heart with the beliefs of the ignorant Wahhabis, but rather bound it to the Salafi Ahmadi beliefs [*ʿalā al-ʿaqāʾid al-salafiyya al-aḥmadiyya*]."[37]

But on what basis should we assume that the adjective *Salafi* in this sentence relates to a concept or a movement called *salafiyya* or Salafism? We are quick to accept this interpretation because it fits in well with our preconceived notion that *salafiyya* is the name of a major religious orientation. Nevertheless, as I shall explain below, there is a more careful and sensible way of interpreting al-Alusi's statement that debunks the idea that he spoke of *salafiyya* as a distinct concept or movement of reform. For the moment, I want to point out that framing a discussion in terms of Salafism is never a negligible affair because it has the insidious effect of bringing a large body of secondary literature and a wider set of assumptions to bear on a text that may otherwise be read on its own terms. The hasty conclusion that Abu al-Thanaʾ al-Alusi was an exponent of *salafiyya*, for example, has led scholars to use his writing as a yardstick by which to measure the "evolution" and historical "trajectory" of Salafism. The same conclusion has also led them to construct intellectual pedigrees and genealogies that

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link al-Alusi to other religious scholars that the secondary literature identifies, rightly or wrongly, as exponents of *salafiyya*. In this way, a mythical conception of Salafism perpetuates itself, and any effort to "complicate" or "nuance" it does nothing to overcome the cycle of mythologizing.

Just as there is always a danger of reading too much into the occasional use of Salafi terminology in primary sources, so there is a risk of exaggerating its semantic range. The issue is not only that scholars commit a lexical anachronism by suggesting that past Muslims used *salafiyya* as an abstract noun meaning "Salafism" when they did not but also that they commit a conceptual anachronism by assuming that the term *Salafi* conveyed layers of meaning that, in reality, have been affixed to the word only in the last ninety years or so. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the work of contemporary purist Salafis who seek to demonstrate the historical legitimacy of their religious orientation. When using empirical evidence to try to convince other Muslims that *Salafism* is a term that dates from the medieval period, purist Salafis systematically resort to a logical sleight of hand that has major ahistorical implications. On the one hand, they use the word *salafiyya* as an abstract noun (*maṣdar ṣināʿī*),[38] which, to grasp finer grammatical nuances, we could translate into English as "Ancestralism" instead of "Salafism." They generally establish that this abstract noun refers to a comprehensive religious orientation—a kind of ideology—that embraces the entire gamut of Islamic beliefs and practices, encompassing theology, law, morals, and etiquette. On the other hand, contemporary Salafis are faced with the fact that no one has yet been able to find the noun *salafiyya* used in the sense of Ancestralism, let alone in the sense of a comprehensive religious orientation, in any source prior to the twentieth century.[39]

To circumvent this problem, contemporary Salafis falsely imply that the terms *Salafi* and *Salafis*, as they appear in medieval texts, are nothing but derivatives of what is now known as *Ancestralism*. (The underlying assumption here is that the technical term *Ancestralism* must have existed and must be as old as the words that allegedly derive from it.) In doing so, contemporary purist Salafis commit two historical errors. First, they intimate that most *salaf*-related terms in the medieval period refer to a particular religious orientation, even though it is not always clear, for instance, that the adjective *salafī* means "Ancestralist" rather than simply "ancestral." Second, they assume that the conceptual content of these medieval terms is equivalent to the conceptual content of today's Ancestralism, which is

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all-encompassing.[40] In other words, contemporary Salafis try to force their empirical evidence into a preconceived notion of Salafism that does not seem to have existed in the medieval period.

Historians are not immune from this kind of lapse. Similar assumptions lie behind the claim that Ibn Taymiyya and his disciples used the term *Salafi* to refer to a "school of thought" that informed not only theology but also law.[41] Although premodern sources leave no doubt that Muslims sometimes used the term *Salafi* as a theological marker to identify themselves as adherents to the Hanbali creed, the idea that the same term played an equivalent conceptual role in the realm of the law and served to denote an originalist (e.g., non-*madhhab*) legal stance is empirically far-fetched.[42] Likewise, textual evidence does not validate the widespread assumption that in the late nineteenth century the term *Salafi* referred to Muslims who took the *salaf* as role models and endeavored to reconcile reason and revelation to assert the relevance of Islam in modern society. For the most part, these interpretations derive from our tendency to inject elements of the purist and modernist versions of the concept we now call Salafism (which is relatively recent) into the term *Salafi* (which is much older). By imposing our habits of mind on primary sources and by failing to give due consideration to both the philological and the philosophical dimensions of the question, we condemn the historical study of Salafism to being a well-meaning but futile exercise. At best, it is tantamount to chasing a historical mirage—namely, the refracted image of a contemporary concept. At worst, we end up chasing a conceptual chimera that exists only in our modern scholarship.

The use of empirical criteria in intellectual history, however, raises another question: Do ideas matter more than the words by which they come to be known? Some scholars argue, for instance, that the study of feminism should not be restricted to the period following the appearance of the words *feminism* and *feminist* in the late nineteenth century.[43] A similar logic applies to the study of Islamism. Even though many scholars adopt the convention that a distinct form of Islamic activism emerged with Hasan al-Banna's founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928, few deem it necessary to ask whether or not al-Banna used the term *Islamism*. (He did in the 1940s, but the fact that this has gone unnoticed goes to show that the issue is considered largely irrelevant.[44]) The reason anachronism seems tolerable in such cases is that the aforementioned

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terms, like so many others, are first and foremost categories of analysis. They denote historical phenomena that scholars define according to their needs and then choose, for understandable reasons, to call feminism or Islamism. Because these terms acquire most of their meaning from the function they serve as vehicles for thinking and speaking about abstractions, their utility trumps their historicity.

Salafism is a different case. Although scholars have now used the term as an analytical category for nearly a hundred years, the underlying justification has always been that *salafiyya* is a legitimate and appropriate label because it is *indigenous* to the Islamic tradition. Implicit in this reasoning is that the term must have one or more indigenous meanings, which scholars should try to retrieve rather than create. As should be obvious by now, the idea that *salafiyya* emerged as a distinct religious orientation when Muslim scholars and activists started using the terms *Salafi* and *Salafism* is still at the heart of the most serious scholarship on the topic. So even if one claims to use Salafism as a mere analytical tool (or etic term, in anthropological jargon), one will inevitably have to circumscribe the meaning of that word by relying on a body of secondary literature that considers Salafism to be an indigenous category (or emic term).[45] Although I disagree with the various narratives of origins found in the secondary literature, I agree that the relationship between an allegedly indigenous concept and the word by which it is known deserves close attention.

Of course, this approach has its limits. It is true that focusing on the conscious formulation of Salafism poses another potential danger, "which is to discard all historical descriptions of conceptual developments if they are not coupled with linguistic ones."[46] But here the historian must exercise discretion, and in the present case, I believe that discarding nonlinguistic conceptual developments is an acceptable price to pay for the much-needed demythologization of Salafism. Contemporary Salafis sometimes contend that their historical heroes did not need to discuss the concept of Salafism or to identify themselves as Salafis in order to *be* Salafis. That may well be the case, but such logic leads us nowhere. The issue is not the purported nature and origin of Salafism but its actual construction as a concept for asserting claims about Islamic thought and activism. Considering the current state of confusion, there is little academic benefit to be gained by presuming that the concept existed before the word. No doubt many intellectual features of what is today known as Salafism have existed

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since the medieval period, but this is tangential to the question of how and why a particular conceptual framework developed. We must acknowledge that the conceptualization of Salafism is itself the product of a historical process that deserves to be examined.

Rethinking Salafism and the Salafis' Understanding of Reform

The purpose of this book, therefore, is to trace the making of Salafism as a concept in both its modernist and its purist versions and to explain how the latter supplanted the former. To understand these developments, the book follows the intellectual journey of the Moroccan Salafi and globe-trotter Taqi al-Din al-Hilali (1894–1987). A former Sufi of the Tijani order, al-Hilali embraced what he later called Salafism in 1921 and embarked on a lifelong mission to study, teach, and defend the primary textual sources of Islam on three different continents. While roaming the region from Rabat to Mecca and from Calcutta to Berlin, he befriended and interacted with many high-profile scholars and activists who embodied different approaches to Islamic reform and who often participated in the conceptualization of Salafism. Figures such as Muhammad ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi and ʿAllal al-Fasi in Morocco, Rashid Rida and Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi in Egypt, Shakib Arslan in Switzerland, and ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Baz in Saudi Arabia are central to the story.

Initially, al-Hilali combined Salafi theology with an unmistakable commitment to reform the Muslim community along modern lines. He gradually abandoned his modernist ideals, however, and spent the last years of his life teaching at the Islamic University in Medina and promoting purist Salafism in Casablanca. He has since gained the reputation of being the father of "Wahhabi-inspired Salafism [*al-salafiyya al-wahhābiyya*]" in Morocco.[47] What can we learn from al-Hilali's trajectory and that of his fellow Muslim scholars and activists? What do their lives and works tell us about the development of Salafism as a concept? The present book is not an intellectual biography per se. But by contextualizing al-Hilali's experiences and those of his associates, I identify a number of key historical conjunctures that contributed to the formation and transformation of Salafism as an empirically identifiable concept.

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The book thus makes three "constructive" arguments that recast the way we conceive of Salafism and its history. The first and broadest argument is that from a conceptual angle the history of Salafism is much more recent than one might expect. I contend that thinking and speaking about Salafism—that is, the very act of articulating this concept in either its modernist or its purist version—is a phenomenon of the twentieth century. Contrary to popular belief, it dates neither from the medieval period nor from the late nineteenth century. It follows that none of the conceptual packages that currently exist should predetermine our reading of earlier sources. Putting away standard assumptions about *salafiyya* further helps us to notice the conspicuous absence of any discussion of a concept called Salafism in either Muslim or non-Muslim scholarship until about the 1920s (and even during that decade, it seems to have received more attention in the works of Orientalists). However we may want to push back the history of that concept, one thing is clear from the sources: prior to the last hundred years, scholars, regardless of their background, did not use the notion of Salafism, nor did they define it or argue about it.

Of course, such an argument appeals to historical wisdom and sensibility rather than pure logic. An observation of this type could never be proven in an absolute sense unless someone carried out the theoretically and practically impossible task of sifting through every single historical document that has been produced since the seventh century. But that does not mean that the observation has no value. The reality is that we already know enough about sources to discern an obvious pattern—namely, that the popularity of the notion of Salafism in contemporary Islamic discourse is historically unprecedented. Even if an indefatigable researcher were to find a hitherto unknown example of the word *salafiyya* being used as an abstract noun prior to the twentieth century, chances are that our observation would still hold. The existence of a rare oddity, or even a few of them, would not change the fact that Salafism is a concept that very clearly came of age in the last hundred years.

Therefore, there is no point in trying to convince ourselves that the word *Salafi*, as it was used in previous centuries, meant anything more than what pre-twentieth-century sources tell us. Here again my first argument shows that there is a noticeable pattern: from the medieval period until the beginning of the twentieth century, Muslim scholars and activists referred to themselves and to others as Salafis only to signal their adherence to

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Hanbali theology, at least with respect to the interpretation of God's names and attributes. This theological stance, as previously noted, was known as the doctrine of the forefathers (*madhhab al-salaf*). Pre-twentieth-century Muslims, in other words, did not use the term *Salafi* to signal their adherence to a movement or multifaceted religious orientation called Salafism (*al-salafiyya*). In Arabic, the two expressions are different for a reason: they represent different conceptual developments and cannot be said to have the same meaning, scope, and history.[48]

There is plenty of empirical evidence to support this interpretation. Ibn Taymiyya spoke of the Salafis as a purely theological party, and he was not the first one to do so.[49] At times, the Wahhabis, too, used the term *Salafi* in a theological sense, as can be seen in the 1853 manuscript of Ibn Bishr's famous chronicle of Najd titled *ʿUnwān al-majd fī tārīkh Najd* (Token of glory in the history of Najd). A partisan of the Wahhabi cause, Ibn Bishr introduces himself as "Hanbali in law and Salafi in belief [*al-ḥanbalī madhhaban al-salafī iʿtiqādan*]."[50] This statement, whose structure is far from unusual, makes very explicit the point that pre-twentieth-century Salafis were exponents of a particular theology, not a particular legal methodology. Once this is established, the aforementioned passage by Abu al-Thanaʾ al-Alusi becomes much more understandable. Evidently, he equated "Salafi beliefs" with what might be called "sound Hanbali theology." Elsewhere in his book, he uses the term *Salafi* in a theological sense and clearly shows that being "Salafi in creed [*salafī al-ʿaqīda*]" meant adhering to Hanbali theology, though not necessarily Hanbali law.[51] Instead of drawing a line between Wahhabism and a new concept called Salafism, as the current scholarship suggests, it appears that al-Alusi was simply trying to deny the Wahhabis' adherence to a preexisting and otherwise respectable theological doctrine. What he meant is that a true follower of Hanbali/Salafi theology such as ʿAli al-Suwaydi could not be a Wahhabi extremist and should not be mistaken for one (thus implying that Wahhabi extremists were beyond the pale of true Hanbali/Salafi theology despite their claims to the contrary).[52]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Muslim scholars throughout the Middle East and North Africa continued to apply the epithet *Salafi* either to themselves or to individuals who, they believed, abided by the doctrine of the forefathers in theology, irrespective of their views on modernity. Whether these proponents of Salafi theology pushed for

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modernist reforms in law, society, education, and politics is an entirely different issue, and the two should not be confused. As it turns out, some of the major modernist reformers of that period were not Salafi in creed, and some of the self-proclaimed Salafis had no modernist agenda at all (the Wahhabis of Najd being the best example). Among the non-Salafi modernists were prominent individuals such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) and Amir ʿAli (d. 1928) in colonial India, al-Afghani, and, arguably, ʿAbduh. Although the secondary literature often identifies them as Salafis, none of these reformers was or even claimed to be Salafi in creed. ʿAbduh, for one, knew that the Salafis were a theological party but refrained from counting himself among them, even at the end of his life. Moreover, his theological treatises often ran counter to Hanbali dogma. Judging from the generally awkward efforts of his associates to portray him as a Salafi after his death, it is obvious that ʿAbduh's theological stance was ambiguous at best.

What, then, should we make of the so-called modernist *salafiyya* movement of which ʿAbduh was allegedly a leader? A close analysis of both primary and secondary sources indicates that this notion began as a twentieth-century Orientalist construct, which Muslim ʿulama and activists later adopted or developed on their own. More specifically, as we shall see in chapter 1, this "social misconstruction"[53] originated in 1919 in the work of French scholar Louis Massignon and spread within scholarly communities beginning in the 1920s. I explain how lax use of the technical term *Salafi* by Arab journalists and booksellers at the beginning of the twentieth century facilitated a semantic shift and why, ultimately, the term *salafiyya* has been taken to mean a movement of modernist reform whose origins date from the late nineteenth century.[54] In that sense, the concept of modernist Salafism initially grew out of the failure to recognize that *Salafi* was first and foremost a theological technical term and that there was no necessary link between promoting an Islamic version of civilizational progress through a combination of reason and revelation, on the one hand, and being Salafi in creed, on the other.

Be that as it may, the notion of modernist Salafism gradually entered the Islamic conceptual repertoire. By the late 1930s, Moroccan reformers had started using the abstract noun *Salafism* to refer to their own Islamic modernist orientation. This was no coincidence, for sources indicate that they built on the conceptual framework of the Orientalists. They appropriated and indigenized a flawed category that European scholars had

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originally invented to classify them. And like the Orientalists, the Moroccan reformers projected this concept of Salafism into the past, thereby perpetuating Massignon's myth, according to which al-Afghani and ʿAbduh spearheaded the Salafi movement in the late nineteenth century. From the 1930s onward, therefore, we can truly speak of the existence of modernist Salafis, as opposed to Islamic modernists who happened to be Salafi in creed. The distinction is important, for, as we shall see, the leading exponent of modernist Salafism in the mid-twentieth century—the Moroccan ʿAllal al-Fasi—did not even adhere to Salafi theology. Rather, he was a vocal advocate of Ashʿari theology—a strange irony indeed. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, this marginal conceptualization of Salafism receded from view. The self-proclaimed modernist Salafis by and large vanished from the intellectual scene, allowing their far more purist counterparts to occupy center stage.

Yet we must remember that the purist conceptualization of Salafism, as we know it today, is also a product of the last hundred years. Although it encompasses the older notion of Salafi theology, purist Salafism is a much more complex and multifaceted concept than the doctrine of the forefathers of the medieval period. The exhaustive and systematic way in which contemporary purist Salafis now define it—as a comprehensive approach to Islam covering every aspect of the religious experience—is also characteristic of twentieth-century ideologies. The construction of purist Salafism thus occurred alongside the construction of modernist Salafism. It, too, was a gradual process that began in earnest in the 1920s, when Muslims started employing and mapping the contours of the abstract noun *salafiyya*. Over time, this conceptual development led to significant changes in what it meant to be a Salafi. The Salafis of the early twentieth century (when being a Salafi still meant being an exponent of *madhhab al-salaf* in creed) were, of course, advocates of a purist conception of theology, but they could easily hold modernist convictions in other realms, such as law, society, and politics. By comparison, the Salafis of the late twentieth century (when being a Salafi meant being an exponent of the all-encompassing purist religious orientation called *salafiyya*) were much more stringent. It is difficult to imagine a Salafi of the 1980s or 1990s embracing internal religious diversity for the sake of Islamic unity and lamenting the lack of mutual respect between the various schools of Islamic theology, as did several self-proclaimed Salafis in the early twentieth century.

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The second argument of the book pertains to the mechanics of this transformation. I contend that the concept of purist Salafism, which developed over several decades, did not initially entail a complete rejection of religious compromise. Leading activists who were Salafi in creed modified their understanding of Islamic reform between the 1920s and the 1950s, mainly to accommodate political considerations and to increase the likelihood of achieving political independence from colonial powers. As a result, they expanded the meaning of *Salafi* beyond the confines of theology and constructed a rigorist notion of Salafism in hopes of strengthening and uniting Muslims of different regions and cultural backgrounds under a common standard of Islamic purity. To be clear, this must not be understood as a shift from modernist to purist Salafism, which is a wrong way of putting the issue. Rather, the conceptual expansion of purist Salafism means that it became increasingly difficult for proponents of Salafi theology to adopt a moderate stance on questions that, until then, fell outside the purview of Salafism. Nevertheless, these activists were reluctant to push religious conformism and purity too far. Most of them were *Islamic nationalists*, and as such, they struggled to strike a balance between unity (the need to mobilize the entire *umma* against colonial powers) and purity (the need to purge the *umma* of the erroneous beliefs and practices that divided and weakened it). It would be too easy to assume that the gradual construction of purist Salafism was a mere reaction against the West.

Therefore, the key to understanding the period stretching from the 1920s to the 1950s lies in understanding that, although the quest for independence led many purist Salafis to adopt a more stringent definition of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, it also forced them to hold their "religious radicalization" within certain limits. Ironically, their efforts to expose the aberration of colonialism—often by using the Europeans' own intellectual weapons—prevented them from rejecting Western philosophical modernity altogether. Al-Hilali, who moved from Iraq to Nazi Germany in 1936 and earned a PhD in Arabic literature from the University of Berlin in 1940, is a case in point. The quest for independence also prompted purist Salafis to reach a temporary modus vivendi with other anticolonial activists whose religious views did not live up to the highest standards of religious purity. Hence, they tolerated modernist Salafis, even though the latter were *territorial-statist nationalists* who placed much less emphasis on religious standardization and even cultivated the idea of local or national forms of Islam.

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The third and last argument of the book is that decolonization transformed this situation by removing the common goal that had until then united Salafis of all persuasions. In the postindependence era, modernist and purist Salafis of the Middle East and North Africa experienced different fates. Because the modernists were territorial-statist nationalists and usually had sociopolitical agendas that required involvement in national politics, they either lost influence to secular elites (and even to the Islamists) or decreased their activism and eventually disappeared behind the state apparatuses of their country of origin. As their political fortune declined, so did their conception of Salafism. Purist Salafis, for their part, fared better. Once the struggle for independence was over, they kept nearly all of their attention focused on religious purity but had far less incentive to tolerate intra-Islamic difference. Given their ability to preach the same religious message everywhere and their willingness to eschew politics, they did not lose their raison d'être. Many former Islamic nationalists, like al-Hilali, found a second home in Saudi Arabia and no longer saw any reason to promote Islamic modernist ideas, as they had previously done to various extents. From the late 1970s onward, their purist conception of Salafism became dominant.

The book comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 elaborates on the conceptual and historical parameters of the study, and it analyzes the meaning of al-Hilali's alleged conversion to "Salafism" in 1921. Chapter 2 focuses on Rida's campaign for the rehabilitation of Wahhabism in the 1920s, which brought al-Hilali and other disciples of Rida to the Saudi state in an effort to assist and moderate the most intransigent Wahhabis. This tactical decision had important consequences for the religious views of many Salafis. The next two chapters show that the gradual and at times hesitant conceptualization of Salafism mirrored the dilemmas that reformers faced between the 1930s and 1950s. Thus, chapter 3 traces the rise of purist Salafism in conjunction with the rise of Islamic nationalism, and chapter 4 examines the question of modernity and the emergence of modernist Salafism in Morocco. Chapter 5 discusses the significance of the postcolonial rupture and how it drove a wedge between purist Salafis and most other Islamic activists, including the modernist Salafis. Finally, chapter 6 emphasizes the entrenchment of purist Salafism and explains the final stage of its conceptualization, beginning in the 1970s.

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Being Salafi in the Early Twentieth Century

Anyone familiar with the work of Jacques Derrida understands that ascribing meanings to terms is a delicate process. His critique of logocentrism was an attempt to show, among other things, that texts offer no guarantee of linguistic stability and that words are not inherently univocal. However, although we should remain aware that interpretation always depends on a hermeneutical process, an overly narrow Derridean approach to language would not do justice to the consistency with which generations of Muslim scholars have used some of the linguistic tools at their disposal. After all, Derrida himself recognizes that the words and concepts of scholarly discourses stem from historically constituted semantic fields and, therefore, have traditional meanings. One may choose to question, criticize, and "deconstitute" these words and concepts, but they are nonetheless embedded in a system of conventions—Derrida refers to them as parts (*pièces*) of a machine.[1] Without pushing this metaphor too far, we must acknowledge that Muslim scholars have made efforts to use certain technical terms in a regular fashion and for particular purposes, at least during specific periods of time. In that sense, there is a reasonable possibility of understanding what the word *Salafi* meant to learned Muslims from the medieval period until the early twentieth century.

One preliminary point worth making is that by the medieval period it was already common for Muslim scholars to declare their adherence to

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a given school of law (a legal *madhhab*) and a given theological doctrine (a creedal *madhhab*) separately. These were distinct aspects of one's religious identity, even though historical connections existed between some of these schools and doctrines. Most Malikis and Shafiʿis were Ashʿari in creed, for instance, just as most followers of Hanbali law were also Hanbali in creed. But these affiliations were not inevitable. The story of Abu al-Fadl Muhammad ibn Nasir (d. 1155), as related in the Hanbali biographical dictionary of Ibn Rajab (d. 1393), is a good reminder that other combinations were always possible. Ibn Nasir, a Shafiʿi of Baghdad, is said to have professed Ashʿari theology until his beliefs were shaken as a result of a dream in which the Prophet told him to follow the doctrine of Abu Mansur al-Khayyat (d. 1106), a local senior Hanbali. When Ibn Nasir woke up, he sought out Abu Mansur at the mosque and explained the dream to him. Abu Mansur suggested to the young man that he remain Shafiʿi in law (*fī-l-furūʿ*) but adopt the *madhhab* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal in creed (*fī-l-uṣūl*). Yet Ibn Nasir replied that he preferred to become a Hanbali in both creed and law because he did "not want to be of two colors [*mā urīdu akūnu lawnayn*]."[2]

At a conceptual level, Muslim scholars did not hesitate to draw a clear line between theological and legal doctrines. However, the labels by which they identified these different facets of their religious identity could vary. The exponents of Hanbali theology, in particular, were in the habit of using various labels to signify their adherence to the creed of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. According to Safi al-Din al-Hanafi al-Bukhari (d. 1786), a scholar from Nablus and a staunch defender of Ibn Taymiyya, these changes in terminology were ways to claim greater religious legitimacy and to distinguish individuals who were "truly" Hanbali in creed from individuals who may have been Hanbali in law but held beliefs that came to be regarded as contrary to the creed of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, such as anthropomorphism.[3] Thus, exponents of Hanbali theology often introduced themselves collectively by labels such as *ahl al-athar* and *ahl al-sunna*, which can be loosely translated as "people of tradition." Likewise, they increasingly referred to their own theological position as the doctrine of the forefathers (*madhhab al-salaf*, from which the label *salafī* is derived), as opposed to the doctrine of Ahmad ibn Hanbal per se, though they maintained that the two were effective synonyms.[4] In scholarly parlance, therefore, a Salafi was an adherent to Hanbali theology who could follow any school of Islamic law or none in particular. The term did not have a legal connotation.

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This specific nomenclature does not seem to have emerged until the tenth century A.D. at the earliest, and thereafter it never supplanted the other labels in use among Hanbalis.[5] Even by the time of Ibn Taymiyya in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the notion of *madhhab al-salaf* was still more commonplace than the word *salafī*, which did not yet occur frequently as a way to categorize individuals. Nevertheless, whenever Hanbali scholars chose to use these technical terms, they systematically assigned them a narrow and specialized theological sense. As much as one might be tempted to believe that a Salafi was a Muslim who adopted an overall methodology based on the recognition of the authority and guidance of the *salaf* in all things religious, pre-twentieth-century texts provide ample evidence that the term played a much more circumscribed semantic role. On closer examination, passages that seem to have a vast scope turn out to be strictly theological in nature. Such is the case with Ibn Taymiyya's oft-quoted declaration: "There is no shame on whoever expounds the doctrine of the forefathers [*madhhab al-salaf*], ascribes himself to it, and refers to it; this must be accepted by agreement, for the doctrine of the forefathers is nothing but the truth."[6] In this statement, Ibn Taymiyya does indeed invite Muslims to refer to themselves as Salafis. Yet this comes from a discussion of the proper interpretation of God's attributes, which limits the possible ways in which the sentence can be construed. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya clearly explains that the doctrine of the forefathers refers to the pristine beliefs of the *salaf* concerning God, which are based on scriptural evidence and uncontaminated by speculative theology (*kalām*).

That the terms *madhhab al-salaf* and *salafī* belonged to a theological vocabulary is undeniable. But whether they always denoted the same theological doctrine and whether that doctrine was indeed the pure creed of the pious ancestors—as the Hanbalis claimed—are different and more complicated matters. On the one hand, there is continuity within the guiding principles of Hanbali theology over time, especially with respect to the interpretation of God's names and attributes. From the medieval period onward, Muslim scholars who adhered to the Hanbali creed were fideists.[7] They generally distrusted any form of rationalist engagement with the scriptures that aimed at delving into the meaning of divine nature, for fear that this could lead to the negation (*taʿṭīl*), distortion (*taḥrīf*), or diminishment (*tamthīl*, literally "likening") of God's uniqueness and transcendence. In the words of Nader El-Bizri, the exponents of Hanbali theology believed

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that "the ontological status of the attributes will remain concealed, and the most that one can affirm about them is their existence, on the grounds that they are mentioned in the Qur'an"[8] and also in the hadith literature. The Hanbalis thus favored a combination of *ithbāt* ("affirmation" of the divine attributes in their literal sense) and *tafwīḍ* ("relegation" of inscrutable theological matters to God), and they made that combination the cornerstone of the doctrine of the forefathers, though there are and have been disagreements about the extent to which *tafwīḍ* is acceptable.[9] Hence, the expression *madhhab al-salaf* was always a token of theological fideism among Hanbalis and non-Hanbalis alike, just as its counterpart, *madhhab al-khalaf* (the doctrine of the successors), was a blanket term for theological rationalism. Muslim scholars, including Ashʿaris, who used *kalām* methods or allowed allegorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*) to explain God's attributes were sometimes said to follow the latter doctrine.[10]

On the other hand, given that the elaboration of Islamic theology was a gradual process, Hanbalis have had to delineate and adjust the contours of the doctrine of the forefathers according to circumstances. The belief that the Qurʾan is the uncreated word of God is a case in point. Ibn Taymiyya, among others, is categorical in affirming that this belief is central to the doctrine of the forefathers because no *salaf* ever said that the Qurʾan was created.[11] This claim, however, involves some retroactive speculation.[12] There is no doubt that the question of the createdness of the Qurʾan is an innovation in the sense that it was first raised by rationalist theologians in the eighth century. Yet the fact that none of the early believers ever stated that the Qurʾan was created does not imply that they tacitly considered it uncreated, as Ibn Taymiyya suggests. Prior to the inquisition (*miḥna*) that began under the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Maʾmun (r. 813–833), most Muslim scholars ignored the issue of the createdness of the Qurʾan and were content to say that the book was the speech of God, without further specification. It was only after the empowerment of the speculative theologians and their attempt to impose their views via the caliphate that the issue became central and forced the traditionists, including Ahmad ibn Hanbal, to systematically assert that the Qurʾan was uncreated (*ghayr makhlūq*).[13]

For Hanbalis as well as for other Muslims, then, the parameters of creedal purity were to some extent dependent on context. As discussions of Islamic theology became more elaborate and more sophisticated during the medieval period, the potential for dispute continued to increase.

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The (often idealized) reconstruction of the pious ancestors' creed—and, by the same token, that of Ahmad ibn Hanbal—sometimes varied from one religious authority to another, thereby giving rise to tensions even among Hanbalis.[14] It is telling that Ibn Taymiyya, whose seminal work has been an inspiration to many in the modern period, was himself the object of criticism by some Hanbali scholars who disapproved of his polemical and rationalist defense of Hanbali fideism.[15] That his theological views have since become the norm among Salafis serves as a reminder that various political, social, and intellectual forces influence the process by which Muslims reconstitute the putative creed of the pious ancestors.

From this perspective, it is undeniable that the expression *madhhab al-salaf* and, by extension, the term *salafī* were, and still are, contestable. Although modern Salafis' understanding of the doctrine of the forefathers has been, in large measure, a Taymiyyan one, rival Muslim scholars have argued that Ibn Taymiyya's neo-Hanbali theology is too peculiar to be treated as a reflection of the genuine *madhhab al-salaf*.[16] Others have gone even further and have questioned the very existence of a doctrine of the forefathers. One Ashʿari scholar, for example, has claimed that because the pious ancestors disagreed on so many theological issues—ranging from the createdness of the Qurʾan to the vision of God on the Day of Judgment—the notion of *madhhab al-salaf* is, by and large, a historical myth.[17]

These debates need not detain us, but they deserve mention because they illustrate the fluidity and historicity of doctrinal systems. The point is that until the early twentieth century the terms *madhhab al-salaf* and *salafī* served specific lexical functions in the religious literature, regardless of the changing conceptions of Salafi theology. From the medieval period onward, Sunni scholars rather consistently applied the label *Salafi* to Muslims who professed, or were thought to profess, some form of Hanbali fideism. This trend was still perceptible in the late nineteenth century. Despite claims to the contrary, pivotal works of that period indicate no conceptual shift toward a multifaceted, self-styled Salafi movement. For example, in his *Jalāʾ al-ʿaynayn fī muḥākamat al-Aḥmadayn*, a key book published in 1881 that is somewhat misleadingly presented as a founding text of modern "Salafism," Nuʿman al-Alusi (d. 1899) does not deviate at all from the hitherto traditional usage of the terms *madhhab al-salaf* and *salafī*.[18] On the contrary, he describes the Salafis (*al-salafiyyīn*) as those who accept the divine attributes without explaining them rationally or falling

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into anthropomorphism. He then contrasts them with the Ashʿaris and all speculative theologians, citing the Egyptian scholar al-Maqrizi (d. 1442) to show that the Hanbali creed is the same as the doctrine of the forefathers, thus confirming that the label *Salafi* served only to designate someone's theological, not legal, position.[19] All this is in keeping with the way scholars from previous centuries such as Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1201), Ibn Kathir (d. 1373), Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalani (d. 1449), al-Suyuti (d. 1505), Ibn al-ʿImad (d. 1679), al-Saffarini (d. 1774), and others used the label.[20]

To be sure, Nuʿman al-Alusi's book proved pivotal in the rehabilitation of Ibn Taymiyya and his religious views in modern times, but conceptually it did not break new ground. In other Sunni sources from Ottoman Iraq, Ottoman Syria, Egypt, and Najd, we find that al-Alusi's contemporaries and near contemporaries used the same terminology for the same specific purpose. Although the Wahhabis stood out for their hard-line stance on questions of orthodoxy (to the point of disturbing other Hanbalis), they were nonetheless theological fideists. They, too, claimed to follow the *salaf* in creed.[21] Consequently, they used the label *salafi* on occasion, just like other exponents of the doctrine of the forefathers did in Arab urban centers. ʿAbd al-Rahman ibn Hasan (d. 1869), a leading Wahhabi scholar of the second Saudi state, clearly explained that a Salafi is a Muslim who affirms God's attributes and avoids the errors of the Ashʿaris, including *taʾwīl*.[22] His son, ʿAbd al-Latif ibn ʿAbd al-Rahman (d. 1876), spoke of Salafi beliefs in the same way, and so did Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ibn ʿIsa al-Najdi (d. 1911) in a 1902 theological epistle.[23] Even at the end of the First World War, the Najdi scholar Ibn Maniʿ (d. 1965), who had close ties to Islamic modernists in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, repeated the formula of the nineteenth-century Wahhabi chronicler Ibn Bishr and concluded one of his treatises by identifying himself as "Hanbali in law and Salafi in creed [*al-ḥanbalī madhhaban wa-l-salafī iʿtiqādan*]."[24] The list of examples could go on.

What is critical for our present purposes is that Muslims did not yet speak of an overall Salafi Islam. Also unfounded is the belief that the label *Salafi* was the prerogative of non-Wahhabi activists or that it referred to a scripturalist yet progressive type of Islamic reform. This is not what the term meant to the late nineteenth-century scholars, including those whom historians have retroactively identified as leaders of the so-called modernist Salafi movement. Here, again, there is a good deal of evidence to show that when Islamic modernists employed the term *Salafi* during the

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period stretching from 1880 to 1920, they used it primarily as a theological marker.[25] Consider the passage from the semifictional book *Umm al-qurā* in which the Syrian modernist reformer ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (d. 1902) has a character claim that the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula "are all Salafi Muslims in creed, and most of them are Hanbali or Zaydi in law [*kulluhum min al-muslimīn al-salafiyyīn ʿaqīdatan wa ghālibuhum al-ḥanābila aw al-zaydiyya madhhaban*]."[26] One could dismiss this statement for its lack of empirical rigor and its bizarre suggestion that the Zaydis of Yemen and the Wahhabis of Najd held the same creed, but one could not reasonably conclude that al-Kawakibi used the term *Salafi* to designate the proponents of a modern movement of Islamic reform. Of course, passages that are either more ambiguous or more subject to alternative interpretations do exist, especially in texts that date from the early twentieth century, but overall they are rare—which is all the more significant given that *Salafi* was still a low-frequency word at the time—and cannot alone explain the entire conceptual edifice of modernist Salafism.

The Popularization of Salafi Labels and the Misconstruction of Modernist Salafism

Given the above considerations, why has the idea that *salafiyya* is a multifaceted reform movement become so widespread in the literature on Islamic thought? Why have historians and social scientists come to refer to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Islamic modernists as Salafis, thereby imposing a category on thinkers who either did not use it at all or did not define it as such? In 1988, the Syrian scholar Muhammad Saʿid Ramadan al-Buti made an astute but factually inaccurate observation that contains some elements of an answer. He argued that leading Islamic modernists from the late nineteenth century onward hackneyed a technical term—*salafiyya*—by making it the slogan (*shiʿār*) of their movement and by using it, among other things, to name their periodicals and publishing houses.[27] This argument is wrong on at least two counts. First, no reformer from the late nineteenth century is known to have used the term *salafiyya* as the slogan of a movement. Here, al-Buti blindly accepts a common but unsupported assumption. Second, the Arab journalists and booksellers who chose the feminine adjective *salafiyya* to name one bookstore and one

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journal during the first two decades of the twentieth century did not mean to establish, let alone reinforce, the idea that the term *salafiyya* stood for a modernist movement of Islamic reform. That idea was an accidental misconception that began to crystallize in 1919, not among Islamic reformers, but among Western Orientalists.

That being said, al-Buti is correct about the popularization of Salafi labels, though this was the *cause* rather than the *result* of the association between the term *salafiyya* and the notion of modernist reform. It is true that at the turn of the twentieth century Salafi labels gained wider currency due to the Arabic printing boom and the involvement of Salafis and individuals close to Salafi circles in journalism and the publishing business. Religious scholars turned "public intellectuals" as well as educated laymen with some religious training started using the terms *madhhab al-salaf* and *salafī* in ways that were no longer constrained by academic conventions. The shift was gradual. For example, when these terms appeared in Rashid Rida's periodical *al-Manar* prior to the 1920s, they usually retained their theological sense. But because of their casual use in mass literature, they were bound to lose their previously narrow meaning, whether intentionally or not. Given that the terms were catchy but not self-evident, the potential for confusion was great. In 1912, Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi (d. 1914), the Damascus-based Islamic modernist who was also Salafi in creed, lamented that many people in his entourage, including journalists, were too ignorant to distinguish a Salafi from a Khalafi.[28]

Certain activists' lack of familiarity with the jargon of the ʿulama was not the only factor behind this semantic shift. Some scholarly authors who had the opportunity to write often and to a wide audience did not always care to be technical.[29] Rida, like al-Qasimi in Syria, knew very well that *madhhab al-salaf* designated a theological doctrine and that Salafis were Sunni Muslims who adopted Hanbali fideism and rejected the allegorical interpretation of God's attributes. There is sufficient evidence to show that he was fully aware of the traditional meaning of these words.[30] Yet on a few occasions prior to the 1920s, both Rida and al-Qasimi employed *madhhab al-salaf* and *salafī* in such loose or unusual ways as to puzzle an attentive reader. In a self-justifying poem directed at his critics, al-Qasimi responded to the charge that he had established his own legal *madhhab* by instead claiming that he was of the Salafi confession (*salafī al-intiḥāl*). What is odd about this passage is that al-Qasimi chose a theological epithet to counter

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an accusation that pertained solely to Islamic law and legal methodology.[31] Commenting on this poem in 1914, Rida went further and explained that *madhhab al-salaf* was "nothing other than to act according to the Qurʾan and the Sunna without any accretion, in the way that [the *salaf*] understood [Islam] at its inception."[32] This broad definition of the doctrine of the forefathers as an all-purpose expression of religious primitivism may seem banal today, but when placed in the context of the religious literature of the mid-1910s, it stands out as an idiosyncratic interpretation of the concept of *madhhab al-salaf*.

A more ambiguous case is that of a subtitle found in the conclusion to the seventh volume of *al-Manar* in 1905. It stands at the top of two paragraphs in which Rida explains his journal's promotion of *ijtihād* and Islamic unity through a return to the Qurʾan and Sunna. The subtitle is *maslak al-Manār al-salafī*.[33] Although it would be tempting to translate it as "*al-Manar*'s Salafi way" and to assume that it validates the existence of the concept of modernist Salafism (thus reading our own presuppositions into the primary sources), the truth is that this subtitle is difficult to interpret. This may well be an instance of the adjective *salafī* being used in a nonconceptual manner, as sometimes occurred when scholars applied it to nonhuman subjects. It was normal, for example, to characterize hadiths as prophetic (*al-aḥādīth al-nabawiyya*) and other oral reports as ancestral (*al-āthār al-salafiyya*), meaning that they were sayings of the pious ancestors. In such a case, the adjective *salafiyya* did not refer to a doctrine, a movement, or a religious orientation. Hence, the most sensible way of translating Rida's subtitle might be "*al-Manar*'s ancestral way." This interpretation finds support in another, more explicit statement. Two months earlier Rida had written in a footnote that shortening the names of individuals (which, in Arabic, can be quite long) was "*al-Manār*'s ancestral custom [*sunnat al-Manār al-salafiyya*]."[34] Needless to say, there was nothing conceptual or religious about sparing readers unnecessary details. It was not a token of Salafism but simply a time-honored habit.

Passages like those mentioned above were the exception rather than the rule, but they are symptomatic of the hackneying of Salafi labels in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This is not to deny that technical terms could be used in more than one way and, consequently, that their meaning could change with the language game itself. (We only need to think of Wittgenstein's much-debated assertion that in many cases "the

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meaning of a word is its use in the language."[35]) But we should beware of assuming that the alternative meanings with which we are now familiar were already standard and well established at the time. At best, the terms *madhhab al-salaf* and *salafī* were in the process of gradually losing their narrow theological sense, often in an ad hoc manner and sometimes by accident or by association, as we shall see. No wonder some Islamic activists at the time had trouble understanding them.

Orientalists who encountered these terms in printed books and the press were also uncertain about their meaning. In 1890, the Hungarian scholar Ignaz Goldziher took notice of the word *salafī* in Western editions of classical Muslim sources. He found it sufficiently intriguing to mention it in his own work, writing that in the medieval period a Salafi was "one who imitates his ancestors" and that imitation of the *salaf* "positively bred the fanatics of the sunna who searched everywhere for evidence relating to the habits of the Prophet and his Companions."[36] Although this interpretation appears to make good sense—especially today—it was a hasty one in that it did not fully coincide with the language of the primary documents that Goldziher had consulted. Goldziher had seen the word *salafī* in Pieter de Jong's 1863 edition of al-Dhahabi's *al-Mushtabih fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, a medieval compendium of names and surnames, which, to be fair, gives only a vague explanation of the term.[37] But the second source that Goldziher cites is more explicit: it is the entry on the Shafiʿi scholar Ibn Salah (d. 1245) in a German edition of *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāẓ*, which is al-Suyuti's digest of al-Dhahabi's much larger biographical dictionary *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*.[38] Had Goldziher consulted the latter work instead of the condensed version, he would have found the term used in an even more specific and typical way, for al-Dhahabi states that Ibn Salah "was a Salafi of sound belief who abstained from the allegorical interpretation of the speculative theologians [*kāna salafiyyan ḥusn al-iʿtiqād kāffan ʿan taʾwīl al-mutakallimīn*]."[39]

Goldziher may not have grasped the theological specificity of the word *salafī* and its connection with the creedal position known as *madhhab al-salaf*, but his oversight ended up having no consequence for European scholarship about Islam because neither he nor his colleagues displayed any willingness to use the term as an analytical category. Evidently, the word *salafī* did not yet fulfill a need among Western scholars—at least not in the way Goldziher defined it. At the end of the 1910s, however, the time was ripe for a new typology, and Orientalists once again took a scholarly

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interest in Salafi labels. This time it was the feminine adjective *salafiyya* that captured their imagination.

In 1917, ʿAbd al-Fattah Qatlan (d. 1931), a Syrian émigré living in Cairo and a former business partner of Rida, founded a short-lived journal titled *al-Majalla al-Salafiyya*, which Qatlan himself translated into English as the *Salafyah Review*, as seen on the top cover. Among other things, the journal served as a promotional vehicle for its mother institution, the Salafiyya Bookstore (al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya), which Qatlan and his longtime associate and brother-in-law Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib (d. 1969) had established in Cairo in 1909. A fellow Syrian émigré, al-Khatib had studied under Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi in Damascus before moving to Cairo and starting a career in journalism and bookselling. With the *Salafyah Review*, Qatlan hoped to revive the activities of the bookstore while al-Khatib was temporarily abroad. It was a way to reach a wider clientele while generating additional revenues by publishing proofread manuscripts and various works in Arabic, most of which pertained to linguistics, literature, and astronomy.

Although it lasted only two years, the journal played a significant role in spreading the word *salafiyya* overseas. In Paris, the first issue of the *Salafyah Review* reached the office of the leading journal *Revue du monde musulman*, to which the French scholar of Islam Louis Massignon was a major contributor. In the previous decade, Massignon had begun subscribing to a large range of Arabic journals in order to provide Western readers with a review of such literature.[40] The task of analyzing the *Salafyah Review*, however, fell to another Orientalist, Lucien Bouvat, who in 1918 reflected favorably on the eclectic and enlightening approach of this engaging journal from Cairo.[41] Still, it is obvious that Bouvat could not make sense of the journal's title, neither in the original Arabic nor in the English rendition. Because the title derived from the Arabic verb *salafa* (to precede), Bouvat naively translated *al-Majalla al-Salafiyya* as *The Retrospective Review* (*La Revue rétrospective*). Despite his familiarity with modern Islamic movements and ideas, Bouvat did not recognize this unusual term as a religious concept. It meant nothing specific to him.

As if he had hoped to rectify Bouvat's honest mistake, Massignon addressed the issue as soon as he returned to Paris in 1919. (A military officer in addition to being a scholar, Massignon had served as a consultant to Georges Picot, the French High Commissioner in Syria and Palestine, from 1917 to 1919.) The explanations he provided in *Revue du monde musulman*,

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however, proved just as misleading. Massignon argued that *Salafiyah* was an intellectual movement that emerged in early nineteenth-century India at the time of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (d. 1831). Siddiq Hasan Khan (d. 1890), the founder of the Ahl-i Hadith movement, had later rehashed its ideas, and "from there, [the *Salafiyah* movement] was spread by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Shaykh ʿAbduh and established itself in Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo and even in the Maghrib and Java."[42] This, however, was nothing but a conceptual bricolage. Massignon was not conveying the indigenous history and meaning of an already existing Islamic concept. He was rather constructing a new category as he went along, juxtaposing available historical facts and observations to produce a seemingly credible analytical tool. A telling indication of Massignon's improvisation is that he did not hold to his original narrative for very long. Between 1920 and 1925, he dropped the references to both colonial India and the early nineteenth century and linked the word *salafiyya* even more intimately to al-Afghani and ʿAbduh. He defined the term sometimes as a group of Muslim activists who called for modernist reform and sometimes as a transnational movement of Islamic modernism founded in the late nineteenth century.

Although Massignon's actual thought process is likely to remain inscrutable—public and private sources do not allow us to know exactly how and why he arrived at his conclusions—circumstantial evidence suggests that the emergence of the *Salafyah Review* on the European scene served as a catalyst for his construction of *salafiyya* as a modernist movement of Islamic reform. At the time, Massignon was preparing a course on the Arabic press, which he first taught at the Collège de France in Paris in the fall of 1919, and he was clearly interested in formulating a typology that would allow him to distinguish the views of the Wahhabis from those of balanced reformers and journalists.[43] He had the intuition that the title of the *Salafyah Review* had potential relevance to the study of Islamic reform. Whether or not he was aware of the fragility of his own conceptual bricolage, he realized that the word *salafiyya* could serve as a category for analyzing the rationalist-cum-scripturalist movement that bore the imprint of Muhammad ʿAbduh's influence and for which Orientalists had trouble finding an appropriate label. Some had previously called it "neo-Islam" and had described it as neither fully Muʿtazili nor fully Wahhabi, which is similar to Massignon's characterization of the so-called Salafi trend as progressive but "semi-Wahhabi."[44] At the time, even Goldziher was struggling

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to find an appropriate label. In a book written earlier in 1919, he had chosen the term *cultural Wahhabism* to refer to the school of thought of ʿAbduh and Rida.[45]

Massignon's intuition, however mistaken, suggests the possibility that he had some familiarity with Salafi epithets. In 1908, he had traveled to Ottoman Iraq and befriended the Salafi scholars Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi (d. 1924) and his cousin, Hajj ʿAli al-Alusi (d. 1922), who were the nephew and the son of Nuʿman al-Alusi, respectively. Massignon had studied Islam and Muslim societies with both of them in Baghdad and had maintained a correspondence with them. He also had exchanged letters with Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi in Damascus, who was a friend of Mahmud Shukri, and was fully aware of the two al-Alusis' relationship with other key reformers such as Rida and Siddiq Hasan Khan.[46] In short, Massignon had been introduced to a circle of Muslim scholars who used the term *salafī*, and he knew not only the links among these individuals but also their intellectual pedigrees. When the *Salafyah Review* caught the attention of Western scholars, he appears to have jumped to conclusions and constructed his own narrative of *salafiyya* by making unwarranted connections among a word, a series of Muslim reformers, and their ideas.

In any case, Massignon's conclusions were untenable. He never produced any empirical evidence that an Islamic movement called *Salafiyah* had existed in the late nineteenth century, and no one has yet been able to substantiate this assertion. To be sure, al-Afghani and ʿAbduh did not claim that label for themselves, nor did they state or imply that modernist reformers who drew inspiration from the *salaf* and their achievements were called *Salafis*. On the contrary, ʿAbduh understood the technical meaning of that term. In 1902, three years before his death, he made a rare mention of the Salafis (*al-salafiyyīn*) in the pages of *al-Manar*. He neither included himself among them nor suggested that the Salafis were proponents of his brand of Islamic reform. Rather, he presented them as Sunni Muslims who differed from the Ashʿaris with respect to theology. One of the most striking features of this passage is that ʿAbduh did not even expect his readers to know who the Salafis were. The word was still sufficiently unusual to require an explanation, even among the subscribers of *al-Manar*, for ʿAbduh deemed it useful to specify in parentheses that the Salafis were "people who adhere to the creed of the forefathers [*al-ākhidīn bi-ʿaqīdat al-salaf*]."[47]

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Massignon's presentation of Rida, whom in 1925 he introduced as the current leader of the Salafiyya party founded by ʿAbduh, was also misleading.[48] It is true that Rida presented himself as the intellectual heir of al-Afghani and ʿAbduh, but contrary to Massignon's insinuations, he never used *salafiyya* as a synonym for balanced reform (*al-iṣlāḥ al-muʿtadil*), nor did he use Salafi labels to designate the reformist group (*fiʾa*), party (*ḥizb*), and school of thought (*madrasa fikriyya*) of his two mentors.[49] For ʿAbduh, Rida, and their associates, *reform* (*iṣlāḥ*) remained the keyword; it was the true banner of their movement. They used it in a comprehensive manner that encompassed not only religious reform but also social, educational, political, and civilizational reform.

Of course, they knew that the term was general, which is why they often had to outline their approach. As Rida explained in 1914, "the appellation 'reform,' as well as its understanding, is broad; it varies over time and from place to place."[50] It also varied from individual to individual. Indeed, some balanced reformers considered Salafi theology to be a pillar of their multifaceted reform program. Chief among them were al-Qasimi, Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi, and, to some extent from 1905 onward, Rida (all of whom identified themselves as Salafi in creed at one point or another). But others held different views on theology, which did not prevent them from belonging to the same balanced reformist movement.[51] One could argue that ʿAbduh, for example, did not follow any doctrinal system in particular. He focused instead on the need to free the mind from theological straitjackets and to ensure the compatibility of all religious belief with reason, even at the expense of texts' literal meaning.[52] Although his Salafi colleagues and disciples later sought to cast him as a proponent of Hanbali fideism, their arguments often appeared to be self-defeating.

In 1906, Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi did his best to reassure an Iraqi Salafi named ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Sinani who doubted that ʿAbduh abided by the creed of the *salaf*. Was not ʿAbduh's claim that reason supersedes revelation whenever there is a contradiction between the two a denial of Taymiyyan orthodoxy, al-Sinani wondered?[53] Indeed, it was. But in his reply, al-Qasimi insisted that, "even though [ʿAbduh] sometimes followed the rules of the theoreticians and the speculative theologians, and even though he sometimes defended these rules, he did not deviate from his love of the *salaf*, and his creed [*iʿtiqāduhu*] did not deviate from their wellspring."[54] In an effort to buttress this rather ambivalent claim, al-Qasimi recounted

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a private conversation he had with ʿAbduh during a visit in Cairo, most likely in 1903. One evening, when he suggested that the way of the pious ancestors was the most correct theological approach, al-Qasimi affirmed that he saw ʿAbduh assenting in silence. But an alleged nod of approval was not exactly a powerful piece of evidence.

Rida had as much trouble portraying his late mentor as a champion of Salafi theology. In 1928, he, too, declared that ʿAbduh was Salafi in creed despite the fact that he interpreted some divine attributes like an Ashʿari—a statement that only reinforced the impression that ʿAbduh was something of an Islamic freethinker rather than an exponent of *madhhab al-salaf*.[55] The comments Rida wrote in his re-editions of ʿAbduh's famous theological treatise, *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, reveal a similar discomfort. Disturbed by a passage in which ʿAbduh praised Abu al-Hasan al-Ashʿari (d. 936) for striking a balance between the position of the *salaf* and that of the *khalaf*, Rida added a footnote to remind readers that al-Ashʿari recanted his own views and fully embraced Hanbali theology at the end of his life. Rida also noted the historical significance of Ibn Taymiyya and his role in proving the superiority of *madhhab al-salaf* over *kalām*, an essential element of Salafi theology that ʿAbduh had failed to mention.[56] No doubt ʿAbduh's Salafi associates and admirers considered him to be a great reformer, but they had obvious reservations about his theological views.[57] Claiming him as one of their own was always an uphill battle.

In sum, not all balanced reformers were Salafis, and not all Salafis were balanced reformers. What happened in 1919 is that Massignon failed to make that distinction and mistook a Sunni theological marker for a general label referring to a reform movement. Although this confusion is understandable given the popularization of Salafi labels in the early twentieth century, Massignon nonetheless took considerable liberties with the meaning of *salafiyya*. For this reason, there is no use trying to find justifications to make up for the historical deficiencies in his claims. No one denies, for instance, that Rida extolled the pious ancestors. Should modern Muslims take the *salaf* as models, Rida argued, they would be rational, flexible, strong, and united. This view explains why the first issues of *al-Manar* contained short articles devoted to the pious ancestors' accomplishments, ranging from the successful politics of the rightly guided caliphs to the military exploits of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAs (d. 671), the Muslim commander who led the conquest of Egypt.[58] In that way, Rida followed in the footsteps of

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al-Afghani and ʿAbduh, who had already invited Muslims to learn about the conduct of the pious ancestors and argued that whoever was familiar with the life of the *salaf* could not fail to see the virtues of reason and the possibility of adapting to changing conditions. All of these reformers believed that the pious ancestors, however defined, exemplified the full potential of Islam. Yet none of them ever took the conceptual step of claiming that their brand of balanced reform was called *Salafiyya* or that the proponents of this reform were called *Salafis*. The first person who did so was Massignon. Hence, the oft-mentioned fact that ʿAbduh and Rida had a different understanding of who the *salaf* were—though interesting—is irrelevant to the conceptual history of Salafism.

Likewise, the name of the Salafiyya Bookstore and, by extension, the name of the *Salafyah Review* cannot serve as evidence that Massignon's conclusions were objectively valid. In 1909, al-Khatib and Qatlan did not name their bookstore after a movement, nor did they choose that name in an attempt to create a new slogan for the Islamic modernist movement. According to al-Khatib, the idea of naming the bookstore Salafiyya came from one of his mentors, Tahir al-Jazaʾiri (d. 1920), a Salafi scholar and close friend of al-Qasimi who had also emigrated to Cairo. Al-Jazaʾiri had such esteem for the doctrine of the forefathers and was so devoted to its revival that he reportedly advised al-Khatib and Qatlan to name their business after it.[59] Yet the two young entrepreneurs (assuming that they were not among those who, according to al-Qasimi, could not grasp the meaning of *Salafi*) had no intention of specializing in theological literature alone. They sold and later printed all sorts of material that had nothing to do with the doctrine of the forefathers and sometimes nothing to do with Islam. Put simply, al-Khatib and Qatlan cared about making a living and avoiding bankruptcy, not about the congruence between their business ventures and the name of their bookstore, to which they never paid much attention anyway.[60] The fact that they popularized Salafi labels more than any other reformers before them is significant, but it does not substantiate the claim that *salafiyya* was the slogan of the reform movement or, even more misguidedly, that the nature and evolution of this so-called Salafiyya movement could be judged according to the kind of books that al-Khatib and Qatlan put on the market.[61]

Nevertheless, and despite all its factual and conceptual shortcomings, Massignon's new typology proved too convenient to ignore. Several

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influential scholars welcomed his contribution and took its validity for granted. In 1921, the Harvard-educated writer Lothrop Stoddard repeated and further misinterpreted Massignon's earliest reference to the *salafiyya* in *The New World of Islam*, which, once translated into Arabic, became a best seller in the Middle East.[62] In 1922, Hartford Seminary's journal *The Moslem World* translated an article from the *Revue du monde musulman* in which Massignon claimed that "the writers known as *Salafiyah*" were followers of al-Afghani.[63] Besides the Belgian Jesuit Henri Lammens, Henri Laoust was the scholar most responsible for spreading Massignon's theories in French. In his seminal 1932 article, Laoust introduced the noun *Salafism* (*salafisme*) and based his entire conceptual framework on Massignon's assumption that *salafiyya* was at once a slogan created by al-Afghani and ʿAbduh and a group of Islamic modernists who pushed for a multifaceted reformist program. The article's opening line shows the extent to which Laoust proceeded from weak premises: "We know how, in 1883 [*sic*], Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and his disciple Muhammad ʿAbduh founded in Paris a canonical reformist party with the title 'Salafiyya' as its emblem and *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa* as its organ."[64] Not only is this statement patently false, but also Laoust cites Massignon's 1919 remarks as his only source of information.

With the weight of scholarly tradition, it became increasingly easy to repeat these erroneous beliefs as if they were well-attested facts. When Sir Hamilton Gibb relied on Laoust's article for his influential *Modern Trends in Islam* in 1947, the same ideas came to pervade English-speaking scholarship.[65] Massignon's typology also found its way into German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, and even Arabic literature through a chain of academics who trusted each other's authority. Examples range from Egyptian scholar Muhammad al-Bahi's book on modern Islamic thought (originally published in 1957), which discusses the so-called *salafiyya* movement of ʿAbduh and Rida on the basis of Gibb's work,[66] to Hans Wehr's Arabic dictionary (in both the original German and the English translation), which defines *al-salafiyya* as an Islamic reform movement founded by ʿAbduh.

Over time, the scholars who noted inconsistencies within this so-called modernist Salafi trend did not usually question the validity of the category they were using or the soundness of the axiom that *salafiyya* was the name of a multifaceted reform movement. Instead, they adjusted Massignon's narrative to fit new realities, claiming, for instance, that a more organized and conservative "neo-Salafiyya" emerged in the 1920s or that Rida was

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in fact the real founder of the Salafiyya movement. These variants, however, are as fragile as the conceptual postulates on which they are built. Since 1919, all attempts at nuancing Massignon's original typology have had the inevitable consequence of leaving some of its most fundamental flaws unchallenged.

Why Did Many Balanced Reformers Embrace Salafi Theology?

Although the notion of *iṣlāḥ* had a long history in Islamic thought, the challenges of the modern era inevitably raised new questions, concerns, and grievances. The combined impact of the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment gradually forced all ʿulama to position themselves vis-à-vis the technological and philosophical aspects of modernity. Some preferred to ignore or belittle many of these modern challenges, arguing that the "late Sunni tradition"[67] represented the most sophisticated stage of Islamic scholarship, which none but the ignorant could dare to criticize.[68] According to these traditional scholars, questioning the authority of the religious status quo (in which scholars were expected to rely on one of the traditional schools of law, adhere to either Ashʿari or Maturidi theology, and follow Sufi teachings) would only cause the community of believers to face serious and unnecessary difficulties. The balanced reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries begged to differ. The late Sunni tradition, they believed, was a source of weakness: it was antiquated, ossified, and overly complicated for the average Muslim. Islamic modernists considered it to be an obstacle that prevented Muslims from achieving the dynamism and level of civilization that they deserved in this world.

In the early twentieth century, however, challenging the religious status quo and undermining the validity of the late Sunni tradition was still a difficult task. To achieve this objective, balanced reformers were disposed to use some of the critical tools and ideas of the Enlightenment as long as they echoed preexisting notions of Islamic thought. This is not to suggest that they were passive receptors rather than active agents, nor is it to imply that modern Islamic reform was a mere product of Western thought. Rather, the point is that balanced reformers critically engaged with the

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ideas of the Enlightenment, either directly or indirectly, and thus distinguished themselves from premodern Islamic reformers. For example, their struggle against blind imitation (*taqlīd*) and their call for independent reasoning in legal matters (*ijtihād*) must be understood, in part, as an attempt to invalidate the arguments of authority on which the late Sunni tradition was built. By inviting Muslims to abandon rote learning and think critically about formative texts instead of relying on secondary sources, they were hoping to make room for more rational ideas and, ultimately, foster sociopolitical change. Leading balanced reformers were sufficiently familiar with European achievements to draw a connection between the political, social, and economic advances of Western societies and the rational underpinnings of the Enlightenment. To some extent, they applied the same logic to the *umma*: Muslims could not hope to regain their greatness without breaking at least some of the chains of tradition and promoting rational thinking within an Islamic framework.

At the same time, balanced reformers did not want the rational dimension of their project to spiral out of control and generate endless debates. Although they believed that responding to the challenges posed by Western modernity required greater religious flexibility and a more rational-instrumental approach to Islam than the late Sunni tradition seemed capable of sanctioning, they knew that using reason to criticize the status quo was a double-edged sword that could cause divisions within the community. The late Sunni tradition, however imperfect, had at least the merit of being a grand compromise. Its historical legitimacy stemmed in large measure from the fact that it had allowed Muslims to overcome the theological and legal divisions of the medieval period. Ashʿari theology, for instance, was a compromise between the overly rationalist approach of the Muʿtazilis and the overly literalist approach of the early Hanbalis. (The same could be said about Maturidi theology, which was dominant in the Indian subcontinent.) In matters of law, the late Sunni tradition recognized all four traditional schools and perpetuated the epistemological synthesis that had solved the medieval struggle between the people of opinion (*ahl al-raʾī*, the jurists who favored reason) and the people of hadith (*ahl al-ḥadīth*, the jurists who favored textual proofs). The similar synthesis between Sufism and exoteric religious sciences—an achievement that owed much to al-Ghazali (d. 1111)—was another feature of the late Sunni tradition that further highlighted its inclusiveness.

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All the same, this grand compromise did not satisfy balanced reformers given that it rested on a system of thought they considered ill suited for the promotion of Islamic revival in the modern era. Under these circumstances, Salafi theology proved appealing to many, for it provided an indigenous and powerful doctrine capable of chipping away at the late Sunni tradition. Those who embraced the Hanbali creed seemed genuinely convinced by its tenets but also saw various other advantages to it. Although Salafi theology was antirationalist in many regards, reformers nonetheless argued that it was more agreeable to reason than the speculative theology of the late Sunni tradition. Rida, for example, confessed that the Hanbalis' opposition to *kalām* had puzzled him in his youth. He had assumed that they were a stagnant group of people who adhered to the literal meaning of texts, who did not truly understand them, who were ignorant of the inherent truths of science, and who could not conciliate Islam and modern knowledge. However, he later came to the conclusion that Hanbali theology provided a more solid and reliable basis for faith than Ashʿari beliefs. Reading Hanbali books, he wrote, was like walking on a straight path, whereas reading Ashʿari ones amounted to swimming in a deep sea, where one has to struggle against the waves of philosophical doubts and the currents of theoretical investigation.[69] In his writings, which were widely read among reformers throughout the Muslim world, Rida repeatedly explained that the Salafi creed was easier to understand than speculative theology (and thus provided a stronger bulwark against the threat of atheism), had a greater claim to orthodoxy, and was less divisive and more conducive to progress and happiness in this world.[70]

In the context of the early twentieth century, the reformers who embraced Salafi theology also had the opportunity to use the old Hanbali theme of creedal purity to bolster their authority as opponents of factionalism, especially in the face of Western imperialism. The Kabyle activist Abu Yaʿla al-Zawawi (d. 1952), a disciple of both Rida and Tahir al-Jazaʾiri who spent over ten years in Egypt and Syria before returning to Algeria in 1920, blamed *kalām* for raising doubts in the minds of those who studied it, thereby breaking the unity of the Muslim community. The Muʿtazilis, Ashʿaris, and Maturidis, he claimed, had all broken away from the pure creed of the *salaf* after becoming confused and entangled in metaphorical interpretations.[71] Rida was even more specific about the significance of these splits. The theological discord among Sunnis, Shiʿis, and Kharijis,

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as well as the intra-Sunni division between Ashʿaris and Hanbalis, was an evil that weakened the strength of the *umma* and allowed foreigners to gain control over Muslim land.[72] Overcoming these factional rifts was another matter, but the Salafis could at least present themselves as the innocent party in these theological disputes. In other words, they had a chance to claim the religious high ground while working to solve a problem for which they said they could not be held responsible.

Moreover, Salafi theology provided a historically rooted fideist anchor in an otherwise rationalist program of reform. Adhering to the doctrine of the forefathers did not prevent balanced reformers from being rational; rather, it allowed them to use reason as much as possible in other fields of inquiry without the fear of going overboard and endangering their faith. There is an interesting passage to that effect in al-Qasimi's aforementioned attempt to defend ʿAbduh from the charge of theological rationalism. By arguing that it was in the realm of Islamic law that ʿAbduh had championed reason, and not on the question of the interpretation of God's attributes, al-Qasimi implied that Muslim activists could push for a very rational approach to legal issues and still be Salafi in creed (as was supposedly the case with ʿAbduh, according to al-Qasimi).[73] The doctrine of the forefathers could thus function as a guardrail, or *garde-fou*, against unbridled reformist enthusiasm.

Another advantage of Salafi theology was that it offered an "orthodox" way to counter beliefs and behaviors that balanced reformers considered wrong, counterproductive, and even embarrassing. Their main target was, of course, the Sufis. One did not need to be a Salafi in order to criticize Sufi beliefs and behaviors, but those who abided by the creed of the *salaf* could tap into a well of weighty arguments from the Hanbali tradition. In particular, the Salafis emphasized Ibn Taymiyya's strict conception of *tawḥīd* and insisted that this aspect of Hanbali theology was part of the doctrine of the forefathers (something that the narrow definition of *madhhab al-salaf* as the rejection of *kalām* did not necessarily imply). Hence, they argued that visiting tombs to seek favors from the dead was a heretical practice insofar as it contravened the unicity of God's lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*) and the unicity of worship (*tawḥīd al-ʿibāda* or *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, meaning that worship is for God alone). Contravening the unicity of God, in turn, constituted a denial of one of His most central attributes. We have an obvious example of this argument in the writings of the Wahhabi

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scholar Sulayman ibn Sahman (d. 1930), who was a Salafi in creed but not a balanced reformer. In 1910, he wrote two epistles in which he repeatedly accused tomb worshippers (*ʿubbād al-qubūr*) of being Jahmis—that is, deniers of divine attributes.[74]

The balanced reformers who hailed Ibn Taymiyya as a paragon of Sunni orthodoxy, however, gave his medieval arguments a progressive twist: they suggested that superstitions were backward and too irrational for the twentieth century. From this line of reasoning came Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi's pronouncement that "pagan" Sufi practices put modern Muslims to shame. In 1907, he wrote: "[The heterodox Sufis] became the laughing stock of the people of abrogated religions such as the Jews and the Christians, as well as the people of philosophical sects and the materialists."[75] Al-Alusi found it quite strange that the leader of the Kaylani family in Baghdad pretended to be Salafi in creed when in fact he was among the custodians of idols who still ate the prohibited votive offerings that Indian devotees and others brought to the tomb of the great Sufi master ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani. Al-Alusi likened them all to the feeble-minded (*sufahāʾ al-ʿuqūl*) and blamed their beliefs and behaviors for the decline of Muslims in an age of progress (*ʿaṣr al-taraqqī*).[76] In Egypt, Rida echoed the same concerns and lamented that Sufis were giving Islam a bad name. Not only did they prevent Europeans from seeing the true, progressive, and rational nature of Islam, but also they paved the way for colonialism and, at times, even collaborated with the imperialist powers due to their ignorance or duplicity. Rida recalls, for example, that he warned Moroccans against the threat of French encroachment and urged them to take concrete steps to protect their sovereignty. But instead of giving due attention to modern education and military reforms, they naively relied on the alleged powers of their Sufi shaykhs.[77]

For all of these reasons, Salafi theology could be used to support Islamic modernism. But the argument that it was at once less divisive and more orthodox than all other creedal positions posed an obvious problem. At the time, few Muslims identified themselves as Salafi in creed, and leading reformers were often too preoccupied with pan-Islamic unity to accuse the majority of their coreligionists of being heretics. For the sake of balanced reform in all its facets, then, even the pure creed of the *salaf* had to be professed with moderation. This is why Rida usually refrained from adopting an exclusivist attitude during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Although he was convinced that he possessed the truth and

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although he claimed that the pious ancestors forbade *ijtihād* and differences of opinion in theology (as opposed to in law), he nonetheless tolerated doctrinal diversity.[78] The Salafis, Ashʿaris, Maturidis, Muʿtazilis, Shiʿis, and Ibadis were all Muslims, he argued, and it was the duty of the reformers to reconcile them.[79] Al-Qasimi displayed a similar willingness to accept other theological schools, even though he did not consider them orthodox. On several occasions, he decried the mutual hatred and exchange of derogatory nicknames (*tanābuz bi-l-alqāb*) among Muslims—and especially between the Salafis and adherents of other creedal positions.[80] His take on Sufism was also remarkably nuanced.[81] This degree of leniency and tolerance is all the more interesting to note because, as we shall see, it gradually disappeared among activists who claimed to be Salafi in creed from the mid-1920s onward.

Yet it is difficult to generalize. Inevitably, the extent to which different individuals sought to reform the Muslim community without being too doctrinaire depended on many factors, including their past experiences, goals, convictions, temperament, and what they thought their regional context required. Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi, for instance, was more uncompromising in his rejection of Sufism and his defense of Salafi theology than were Rida and al-Qasimi. In the late nineteenth century, he had been close to the Rifaʿiyya order, which allowed tomb visitations and ecstatic practices. But for reasons that are not altogether clear, by the 1900s he had already become a staunch opponent of Sufi brotherhoods and did not shy away from threatening with death anyone who refused to repent and who knowingly continued to perform "unlawful" visitations or ask the dead for help.[82] In 1887, he thought it possible to be a Salafi in creed (*salafī al-iʿtiqād*) and a Sufi of admirable conduct (*fī-l-taṣawwuf badīʿ al-taṣarruf*) at the same time, as he said of his grandfather Abu al-Thanaʾ al-Alusi.[83] Twenty years later, however, he showed no great desire to defend acceptable forms of Sufism.

Taqi al-Din al-Hilali's Conversion in 1921

The story of Taqi al-Din al-Hilali fits into this picture and enables us to examine conceptual issues more closely. It exemplifies, on the one hand, how reason-based arguments could convince a skeptic that Salafi

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theology, or parts thereof, represented a superior set of beliefs and, on the other hand, how one's qualified or total rejection of Sufism was often a crucial intellectual step toward embracing Islamic reform. But given that Salafi theology and balanced reform were two distinct realities, it is worth asking what exactly al-Hilali thought he converted to. The answer is not easy. His claim that he abandoned Sufism and embraced Salafism (*al-salafiyya*) in 1921 must be taken with a grain of salt.[84] Al-Hilali wrote this statement in 1971 and used the language of the day. But fifty years earlier Moroccan scholars do not seem to have used this terminology any more than their counterparts in the Arab East did. The terms *salafī* and *madhhab al-salaf* were known and were used in their theological sense, but they were unusual even among the Moroccan ʿulama who were in contact with Salafi scholars in Ottoman Syria and Iraq at the beginning of the twentieth century.[85]

What we know about the writings of Morocco's earliest Islamic modernists also suggests that the label *Salafi* was not in vogue. Muhammad al-ʿArabi al-Khatib (d. 1980), a former Sufi who was for a time Rida's closest Moroccan associate, appears to have disregarded that label upon his return from a three-year stay in Egypt in 1914. Rather, he identified himself as a reformer (*muṣliḥ*) and an adherent of a balanced doctrine (*madhhab muʿtadil*).[86] As is often the case, however, Moroccan scholars who adopted the term *Salafism* in the mid-twentieth century eventually used it to describe all of al-Khatib's reformist endeavors. The same is true of Abu Shuʿayb al-Dukkali (d. 1937), the so-called Muhammad ʿAbduh of Morocco, who is commonly hailed as the father of modernist Salafism in the country, even though the term is obviously an anachronistic designation for his brand of reform.[87] Hence, we must be careful not to take al-Hilali's conceptual retro-projection for granted.

Muhammad Taqi al-Din al-Hilali (his full name) was born in 1894 in the Tafilalt region of southeast Morocco, in a village near the historic ruins of Sijilmasa, once a flourishing trade post on the caravan road to Timbuktu.[88] The Tafilalt region is also the cradle of the ruling ʿAlawi dynasty, and like the current king of Morocco, al-Hilali claimed an Arab and sharifian descent through ʿAli and Fatima, respectively the cousin and the daughter of the Prophet. More specifically, as the last name al-Hilali indicates, Taqi al-Din's ancestry had links to the Banu Hilal, the unruly Arabian tribe whose emigration to North Africa was ordered in the eleventh century

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by the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir. Indeed, it was from the city of Kairouan, south of Tunis, that one of al-Hilali's ancestors traveled to southeast Morocco, where he then settled down.

As effervescent as the region of Sijilmasa may have been in the medieval period, by the end of the nineteenth century it was but a pale reflection of its grandiose past. According to al-Hilali, there were few educated people in the area. His father, ʿAbd al-Qadir, was one of them: he was a jurist (*faqīh*) and a deputy judge.[89] Under his father's guidance and with the help of his grandfather, the young Muhammad al-Taqi (as he was then known) began his religious education at home. Because he had learned the Qurʾan by heart by the age of twelve, his father decided to send him to a local scholar for lessons in Qurʾanic recitation. But at the age of fifteen, following the death of his father, al-Hilali lost interest in his studies and continued to neglect them until after he left for Algeria in 1915 to look for work.[90]

Al-Hilali recounted his childhood memories with a particularly critical view of the religious life at the time:

> I saw the people of my region [Sijilmasa] being extremely enthusiastic about Sufi brotherhoods; you could hardly find one of them, educated or ignorant, who was not affiliated to the corps of one of the orders and fond of its shaykh, [as though] he were mad with love. [He] would ask [the shaykh] for help in cases of misfortunes, and be always grateful and praiseful. If he obtained a favor, he would thank the shaykh for it; if a calamity befell him, he would impute it to his insufficient love for the shaykh and inadequate adherence to the brotherhood. It would not occur to him that his shaykh was incapable of doing anything either in the hereafter or in this world. . . . I heard people saying: "He who does not have a shaykh, Satan is his shaykh."[91]

Although he wrote these lines decades later from the standpoint of an anti-Sufi, his depiction is in keeping with other accounts of the pervasive influence of Sufism and Sufi brotherhoods in early twentieth-century Morocco, especially in rural areas. A British member of the Royal Geographical Society who traveled to the Tafilalt region in the year of al-Hilali's birth claimed that Sufi brotherhoods were exceptionally thriving in that region.[92] In retrospect, it was only natural for al-Hilali to be inclined toward mysticism. We know that his father, far from discrediting Sufism,

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was favorable toward the practice of visiting the tombs of local "saints" and asking them for help (*istimdād*).[93] Thus, like most inhabitants of the Tafilalt, the young al-Hilali yearned to join a Sufi order. His wish was to join the Tijaniyya, whose popularity among the educated elite of the region aroused his interest and curiosity. He was still an adolescent when he visited the head of the local branch and asked him to be initiated. He learned the order's litany (*wird*), took part in the daily office (*waẓīfa*), and remained a member of the Tijaniyya for the next nine years.

Al-Hilali was traveling in Algeria when a series of unusual experiences caused him to doubt his Sufi convictions for the first time. In between two towns, the camel he was supposed to look after managed to untie its legs and escaped in the desert. Al-Hilali tried to approach the animal, but every time he reached for its neck, the camel jumped with fright and ran away. His reaction was to implore the eponym Sufi shaykh of his brotherhood, Ahmad al-Tijani (d. 1815), and beg him to make the camel stop and kneel. The stray animal never complied, but al-Hilali instinctively blamed himself: "I did not suspect my shaykh at all of being unable to fulfill my wishes."[94] Convinced that he had failed to please his master, al-Hilali was in spiritual distress. He found solace in a volume from al-Ghazali *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (The revival of the religious sciences) that he had come across unexpectedly. Deeply moved by this reading, he began staying up through the desert's cold nights in a state of prim devotion. One such night, while he was praying in front of his small tent, al-Hilali claims that he saw white clouds emerging from the eastern horizon. The clouds then moved in his direction until an individual came out of them, approached him, and began to pray. Terrified by this nightly apparition, al-Hilali asked God to make the individual either speak or leave. The individual eventually greeted al-Hilali—though the latter could not hear a voice—and slowly walked back to the white clouds that carried him away. He disappeared out of sight in the dark.

Al-Hilali was never able to ascertain what happened to him or to determine what kind of being he encountered that night. Yet he was convinced that it was not a satanic figure. On the contrary, he seemed inclined to believe that the individual was an angel of good omen. Indeed, a few days later the Prophet Muhammad reportedly appeared to al-Hilali in a dream (*fī-l-manām*) to give him specific instructions.[95] According to his recollections, the Prophet took his hand and ordered him to study religious

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science. When al-Hilali asked whether he should study exoteric or esoteric knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ẓāhir am al-bāṭin*), the Prophet gave him an answer that proved fateful: "He told me: the exoteric knowledge."[96] In the midst of this conversation, al-Hilali could not help but wonder why the Prophet was ordering him to study while he was in the middle of French-controlled Algeria; after all, some Moroccan ʿulama readily condemned the Muslims who traveled there.[97] Perplexed, al-Hilali asked whether he should study in the land of the Christians or in the land of the Muslims. The Prophet told him he could study in either one, for all lands belong to God.

These instructions made such an impression on al-Hilali that he followed them very closely throughout the remainder of his life. Yet because the Prophet had not condemned his affiliation to the Tijaniyya, the thought of abandoning Sufism never occurred to him. In al-Hilali's mind, leaving his *ṭarīqa* was still tantamount to leaving Islam. At the time, he merely wished to obey the Prophet and to study exoteric religious science—that is, the nonintuitive and scripturalist sciences usually associated with hadith literature, Qurʾanic exegesis, and jurisprudence. In view of this goal, al-Hilali visited a man named Muhammad ibn Habib Allah al-Shanqiti, the most learned and pious person of a local Algerian tribe, and asked him for advice about higher studies in Morocco, Tunisia, or Algeria.

As it turned out, al-Shanqiti ran a school in a tent, where he taught his students the basic principles of religious science. When he invited al-Hilali to enroll, the latter reluctantly accepted. Though al-Shanqiti's curriculum did not live up to al-Hilali's ambitions, he studied with this professor for at least three years and followed him when he relocated his school near Oran.[98] During this period, al-Hilali learned Maliki jurisprudence and Arabic grammar. He also developed his teaching skills, as he occasionally substituted for al-Shanqiti. This line of work proved rewarding, and al-Hilali was soon hired to teach for a notable from southern Algeria. Two years later he seized the opportunity to move back to his native country when Ahmad Sukayrij (d. 1944), a fellow Tijani and chief judge of the city of Oujda, asked him to tutor his son and nephew in Arabic literature.[99] Al-Hilali accepted the job and stayed in Oujda for a year. He then traveled to Fes, where he hoped to fulfill his dream of pursuing higher religious education in a renowned school.

It was there that al-Hilali's religious outlook changed most drastically. Upon his arrival in the old city, he briefly attended classes at the

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Qarawiyyin, the utmost center of religious learning in Morocco, and claims to have quickly obtained a diploma (*shahāda*) from it.[100] His studies were short and do not appear to have left a profound impression on him. Al-Hilali's religious identity remained sensibly unchanged and continued to revolve around Sufism. When he paid a visit to the prominent Sufi leader ʿAbd al-Hay al-Kattani, whom he had already met in Oujda, the latter allegedly warned al-Hilali against the Tijaniyya and—in what seems to be a rather unlikely statement—against the inherent treachery of all Sufi orders including the Kattaniyya itself. But al-Hilali was nonetheless impervious to doubts and refused to give any credence to such allegations.[101] Personal testimonies and arguments of authority seemed unable to weaken his belief in the Tijaniyya or affect his deeply rooted Sufi convictions.

Nevertheless, al-Hilali's conversion occurred quickly in November 1921. Al-Hilali was talking with a bookseller who worked near the Qarawiyyin when the latter asked him if he had met Muhammad ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi (d. 1964), the famous reformer who lived in Fes. Al-Hilali had evidently heard of him because his reply was categorical: "I said to [the bookseller] that I would never sit next to that man and would not meet him, because he hates shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani and spoke evil of his brotherhood."[102] The bookseller told al-Hilali that as a student of religious knowledge he would benefit from being more open-minded and willing to converse with people whose opinions differed from his. By pointing out to al-Hilali that he had nothing to lose besides a great opportunity to learn, the bookseller convinced him to look for Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi at the tribunal of Fes, where he worked as a judge (*qāḍī*).

By the 1920s, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi was already an important figure of the Islamic reform movement in Morocco. Born to a family of religious scholars, he had studied at the Qarawiyyin and had been a pupil of al-Dukkali. At first, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi defined his social role through anticolonial struggle. In 1908, following the French occupation of Casablanca, he allegedly sold all his books to buy a rifle and a horse so he could join the tribal resistance led by Muha U Hammu. But because this improvised army was too weak to engage French troops, it soon disbanded, forcing Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi to explore other ways of resisting European encroachment.[103] Balanced reform—in particular, its educational dimension—became for him the means most suited to elevating the Moroccan people morally and intellectually until they regained independence. Therefore, in

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addition to being a judge in Fes, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi was, first and foremost, a teacher at the Qarawiyyin, where he had worked since 1912.[104]

Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi's biographers have described him as the proponent of an enlightened Salafism (which is a misnomer) who, like ʿAbduh and Rida, believed that Islam should be understood in the light of philosophical modernity.[105] He himself acknowledged that he was influenced by Rida's journal *al-Manar*.[106] Among other examples of his modernist and progressive approach, he supported the concept of a constitutional monarchy, opposed polygamy and triple repudiation (*ṭalāq*) on the basis of their irrationality, and, later in his life, encouraged the daughters of sultan Muhammad V to remove their veils in public in order to lead the way for the emancipation of Moroccan women.[107] For Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi, strengthening Moroccans meant liberating them from the weight of stagnation (*jumūd*), whereas Sufism contributed to maintaining that weight. Al-Hilali knew all too well that he was about to meet an opponent of the Sufi orders, but he might have been unaware that Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi was himself a former Tijani.

After his conversation with the bookseller, al-Hilali went to the tribunal and ran across Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi as he was exiting the building. The two agreed on an appointment later that evening at the latter's house. Their meeting started out in a formal and somewhat bookish manner: Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi stood up, put books in front of his young guest, and talked about them. Although al-Hilali found the man congenial and very educated, he was not particularly intrigued by his speech and was soon ready to leave the house. When Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi invited him to spend the night, al-Hilali accepted but soon began to regret his decision when other guests arrived and set out to mock and criticize Sufi brotherhoods. Al-Hilali claims that he felt so uncomfortable and guilt ridden that he tried to escape the property. Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi, who noticed the malaise, asked his young guest why he seemed so dispirited. Al-Hilali explained that he was a Tijani and could not remain among people who openly denigrated his convictions. It was at this moment that Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi confessed to al-Hilali that he, too, had belonged to the Tijaniyya. He apologized on behalf of his friends but kindly challenged al-Hilali to a debate about the soundness of his beliefs. Al-Hilali accepted out of pride.[108]

The arguments that Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi raised all revolved around a single question, one that is at the core of the Tijaniyya's legitimacy: Did

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Prophet Muhammad truly appear to al-Tijani while the latter was awake rather than asleep? In other words, was this Sufi order really based on instructions that al-Tijani received directly from the Prophet in the eighteenth century? To understand the significance of this issue, we must keep in mind that the Tijaniyya is, to a certain extent, unlike other Sufi brotherhoods. This "Tijani exception," as one scholar called it, stems from the belief that al-Tijani obtained his mystical knowledge in 1782 through a vision of the Prophet that occurred while he was awake.[109] Visions of the Prophet are far from uncommon in Islamic history. Muslims of all convictions have reported them, and al-Hilali was no exception. However, these visions usually occur in dreams—hence the particularity of al-Tijani's story. Because he received his guidance and his litany from the Prophet and, above all, in a state of vigilance, al-Tijani could claim a superior status for himself and his brotherhood. This was, at least, how his later disciples perceived him. Al-Tijani was given the title of *khatm al-awliyāʾ* (seal of the saints) by analogy to Muhammad, who is considered seal of the prophets. By virtue of the inherent superiority of its origins and the prophetic source of its mystical knowledge, the Tijaniyya has been perceived as arrogant. Never had a Sufi brotherhood caused so much controversy and generated so many passionate denunciations.

Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi endeavored to convince al-Hilali that the very basis of the Tijaniyya was false. By attempting to demonstrate that the story of al-Tijani's exceptional vision made no sense, he wished to invalidate the Tijaniyya as a whole. In a manner that is reminiscent of the Socratic method, he confronted al-Hilali with a series of five hypothetical propositions whose purpose was to unveil the illogical nature of his Sufi beliefs. First, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi reminded his guest of the conflict that pitted the Meccans against the Medinans in 632 regarding the succession to the Prophet. The two groups could not agree on the political and religious future of the community: the Ansar considered a dual system—a ruler for each community—but the Muhajiirun claimed that power should belong solely to the tribe of Quraysh. Their disagreement was so strong that it delayed the Prophet's burial for three days. Yet Muhammad never appeared to his own companions while they were awake in order to settle such a crucial dispute. Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi asked, Why would the Prophet have granted this privilege 1200 years later to al-Tijani, a man of lesser stature, and for a less important reason?

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Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi followed with four other observations of a similar nature. Why, for instance, did the Prophet not appear to either Abu Bakr or Fatima, his own dear relatives, when the two were quarreling over inheritance? Why did he not appear in broad daylight during the Battle of the Camel in 656 to prevent internecine strife and bloodshed? Why did he not appear to the leader of the Kharijis and order him to obey ʿAli? Why did he not appear during the conflict between ʿAli and Muʿawiya, when the community was losing its best people and the unity of the *umma* was at stake? In each case, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi implied that it would have been illogical for the Prophet to appear in broad daylight to al-Tijani when he had never done so in these aforementioned cases, where his appearance would have been more urgently needed, appropriate, and useful.

Throughout the debate, these arguments increasingly dumbfounded al-Hilali. His responses—when he had any—were based mostly on the sayings of al-Tijani. Nevertheless, al-Hilali refused to admit his defeat. The two men met seven times afterward, and by the last session, al-Hilali realized that he had been completely mistaken about Islam. He became convinced that all Sufi brotherhoods were misleading, that Muslims should rely only on the canonical scriptures, and that it was impossible to combine these two realities.[110] Whether Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi was right or wrong about the Tijaniyya is beside the point. For our purposes, what matters is that he managed to convince al-Hilali, who experienced a rational-cum-scriptural awakening that changed his religious beliefs as well as his epistemological assumptions. Throughout his discussion with Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi, al-Hilali sensed the inferiority of arguments based on hearsay evidence, secondary sources, and Sufi literature. The sayings of al-Tijani failed to impart as much authority to a claim as did direct quotations from the Qurʾan or the Sunna.

How should historians best describe this change conceptually? Sources are too few and not sufficiently contemporary to the event to provide insights into how al-Hilali conceived of this conversion. All we can surmise is that he envisioned orthodoxy as the opposite of Sufism. We also know that he decided to focus exclusively on exoteric knowledge, in accordance with the instructions he had received from the Prophet in Algeria. Prior to his conversion, al-Hilali did not think that esoteric knowledge was inherently inferior to exoteric knowledge or that the two types of science could not be combined. His encounter with Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi changed

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this assumption. More specifically, al-Hilali developed a marked interest in the science of hadith, which he came to regard as the exoteric science par excellence.

To the extent that the promotion of reason combined with a return to the formative texts of Islam was a feature of balanced reform in Morocco and elsewhere, al-Hilali was on his way to becoming one of its proponents. Yet nothing in his autobiographical narrative suggests that Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi introduced him to other key ideas associated with balanced reform, such as the reassessment of Islamic jurisprudence, the borrowing of science from the West, or, more generally, the reconciliation between modern civilization and Islam. Al-Hilali did not yet seem concerned with sociopolitical progress and modernization, nor did he display any desire to become a proto-nationalist activist and help his people cope with the challenges of colonialism—that would come later. At the time, his priority was to gain a particular kind of religious knowledge, wherever it took him, in order to pursue religious reform.

As we have seen, however, one did not need to be Salafi in creed to work toward this goal. Not all critics of Sufi excesses, for example, were from among the Salafis. Should we still conclude that al-Hilali embraced Salafi theology in November 1921? The reality is that we cannot be sure this is how he conceptualized his conversion, just as we cannot ascertain whether Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi, who left virtually no written works, referred to himself as a Salafi or not. Here, prudence is in order, for al-Hilali's story is not as explicit as that of other early twentieth-century conversions. Consider the case of ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Tilimsani, a trader from Jeddah who had studied at al-Azhar in Cairo. Al-Tilimsani is said to have abandoned Ashʿari theology and adopted the Salafi creed after eighteen days of debates with the Wahhabi scholar Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ibn ʿIsa al-Najdi. These debates reportedly revolved around both the unicity of worship and the unicity of God's names and attributes (*tawḥīd al-asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*).[111]

Al-Hilali's account is less clear and more subject to dispute. Although Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi challenged him on issues of belief, there is no indication that the two men dealt with *tawḥīd* per se, let alone with the question of the interpretation of divine attributes, which was so central to the notion of *madhhab al-salaf*. One could argue that the substance of their debate was nonetheless within the framework of a conversion to Salafi theology. Indeed, judging from his discussion of what constitutes

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such a conversion, it is probable that Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi would have regarded both Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi and al-Hilali as fellow adherents to the creed of the *salaf*.[112] This is all the more likely given that Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi had borrowed some of his rational anti-Sufi arguments from al-Alusi's 1907 book *Ghāyat al-amānī fī-l-radd ʿalā al-Nabhānī*, as al-Hilali later found out.[113] But this is conjecture, and it is equally possible that another scholar would have refused to label them *Salafis* before being able to gauge their views about theological fideism.

So although there are good reasons to believe that al-Hilali converted to Salafi theology, we should keep in mind that conceptual speculation is precisely what has bred so much confusion in the secondary literature. All too often the label *Salafi* has been used out of convenience to classify Islamic reformers whose religious orientations are hard to pin down. From a strictly empirical point of view, it remains that the first documentary evidence of al-Hilali calling himself a Salafi dates back to 1927. By that time, however, the term had already acquired a broader meaning that encompassed more than theology, and a number of influential Salafi reformers from the Arab East were in the process of growing more sectarian. But al-Hilali was no longer in Fes when these developments occurred. Only a few months after his encounter with Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi, he left Morocco for Egypt in search of hadith knowledge.

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2
Rashid Rida's Rehabilitation of the Wahhabis and Its Consequences

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When Taqi al-Din al-Hilali arrived in Egypt in 1922, he probably did not think that his quest for religious science would become a worldwide voyage or that it would take him twenty years to set foot again in Morocco. Nevertheless, his conversion in November 1921 provided him with the necessary resolve to make sacrifices. It was in Egypt that he committed himself to a life of proselytism: "I vowed to God that I would call [people] to His oneness and the Sunna of His Prophet wherever I am; this is the most important purpose in life."[1] Indeed, he soon found an opportunity to go to the village of Rirmun, in Upper Egypt, to support a small community of peasants who were struggling against the alleged enmity of Sufi shaykhs.

Yet it was in Alexandria that al-Hilali first took on the role of teacher and defender of religious reform. At the time, a former student and colleague of Rashid Rida named ʿAbd al-Zahir Abu al-Samh was the imam of a small mosque in the neighborhood of Raml. According to al-Hilali, Abu al-Samh faced constant opposition and was even subject to physical violence. The religious elite of Alexandria accused him of being a Wahhabi and of causing dissension (*fitna*) within the community by denying the miracles of Sufi "saints" and the Prophet's capacity to intervene in this world from beyond the grave.[2] When his outraged detractors complained to the Egyptian authorities, the governor of Alexandria ordered Abu al-Samh to stop

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preaching and had his mosque closed. It is not clear whether al-Hilali and Abu al-Samh were already good friends at the time, but Abu al-Samh knew and trusted the young Moroccan enough to contact him and invite him to act as a substitute preacher.[3] Al-Hilali accepted the offer and, for about two months, headed the small mosque under these controversial circumstances.

Evidently, al-Hilali had made his way into a select group of Rida's disciples. Sources do not indicate whether he met Abu al-Samh through Rida or the other way around, but we know that he crossed their paths while seeking to learn hadith. One of al-Hilali's first moves upon arriving in Egypt had been to go to al-Azhar University in Cairo. However, the venerable Islamic institution did not meet his expectations: he attended classes but quickly withdrew because the professors could not provide him with the knowledge he was seeking.[4] Eventually, he began attending Rida's private sessions (*majālis*). There he found all the depth and dynamism that was missing at al-Azhar. Rida was an engaging teacher, and the reformist ideas he defended were no less stimulating. Al-Hilali later declared that the sharp discussions that took place during these sessions allowed him to reach intellectual maturity.[5] Over time, a strong personal relationship developed between the two men. Al-Hilali visited Rida regularly, wrote articles in *al-Manar*, and kept up a regular correspondence with his new mentor.[6] Along with several younger members of Rida's circle, al-Hilali soon was involved in a key episode in the evolution of the Islamic modernist movement.

In the field of modern Islamic intellectual history, Rida's relation to the Wahhabis and their religious orientation remains a blind spot. On the one hand, virtually all scholars acknowledge that Rida became increasingly conservative during the last twenty years of his life—a transformation that culminated with his all-out campaign to rehabilitate the Wahhabis in the mid-1920s. As a result, he became much less tolerant of religious diversity, especially after 1924. On the other hand, scholars have always struggled to make sense of this shift. Albert Hourani, who seems to have felt strangely at a loss for an explanation, intimated that Rida's Syrian origins must have made him sympathetic to Hanbalism, which, in turn, must have made him sympathetic to Wahhabism.[7] Others have raised the possibility that a younger and more rigorist confidant could have persuaded Rida to change his religious views and drawn him closer to Wahhabism.[8]

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Another argument, which is common but nonetheless verges on historical determinism, suggests that liberal tendencies in Egypt and other Arab countries had grown to such an extent that they elicited a natural counterreaction, thus making the triumph of Wahhabi ideas almost inevitable.[9] Although it is true that the colonial context of the 1920s made it easier for some Islamic activists to adopt a more conservative outlook, contextualization alone does not make for a satisfying explanation.

The issue thus deserves closer examination—and not only because it is still relatively unexplored. It also matters given Rida's influence as one of the foremost exponents of balanced reform in the early twentieth century. Why did he become such an enthusiastic supporter of the Wahhabis? Why did he change his mind about the virtue of religious tolerance for the sake of Muslim unity? What impact did this intellectual and ethical shift have on what it meant to be a Salafi in the late 1920s? This chapter contends that Rida tried to rehabilitate the Wahhabis primarily for reasons of sociopolitical expediency—that is, more out of necessity than conviction. Although he was no doubt hoping for the success of King ʿAbd al-Aziz Al Saʿud (also known as Ibn Saʿud), a close reading of the primary sources shows that Rida continued to regard the religious scholars of Najd with suspicion. Therefore, his campaign of rehabilitation was twofold: it was as much an attempt to rid the Wahhabis of their counterproductive religious attitude as it was an effort to help them overcome their lack of popularity in the newly conquered Hijaz and abroad. To achieve these goals, he facilitated the transfer of some of his closest disciples to Mecca and Medina. In the end, however, the rehabilitation campaign pushed these disciples to adopt a more stringent approach to the definition and implementation of Salafi norms.

Unconditional Support to ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Al Saʿud

At first glance, Rida's attempt to rehabilitate the Wahhabis is puzzling. To be sure, he claimed to be Salafi in creed and relied more heavily on transmitted knowledge (*naql*) than did Muhammad ʿAbduh.[10] But as a balanced reformer, Rida still upheld notions of rationality and progress that had never been the hallmark of the Wahhabi movement. His mentor, ʿAbduh, had indeed criticized the Wahhabis and their religious ethos for running

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counter to the intellectual and social objectives of Islamic modernism. Although the Wahhabis originally declared their intention to wipe off the dust of *taqlīd*, ʿAbduh argued that they ended up being more narrow-minded and disgruntled than the blind imitators. According to him, they were no friends of science and civilization.[11] How, then, could Rida become their most dedicated supporter?

During the decades that followed ʿAbduh's death in 1905, increasing European involvement in the Middle East generated a sense of urgency among Islamic reformers. With the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the failure of Faysal's Arab Kingdom in 1920, the loss of Iraq and Greater Syria to the Mandatory Powers, the triumph of secular Kemalism in Turkey, and the abolition of the caliphate in 1924, the well-being of the *umma* appeared seriously threatened. Rida's initial response to this sequence of events was not to support one group or one doctrine in particular, for he believed that factionalism and sectarianism could only weaken the already fragile Islamic community. Instead, he continued to promote Muslim unity through the pages of *al-Manar* while personally inviting Muslim elites to set their differences aside in order to prevent further European encroachment. In 1919, Rida advised Sharif Husayn in the Hijaz and ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Al Saʿud in Najd—who were then rivals for the control of Arabia—not to fight one another. This was no time for division, Rida pleaded, so the two rulers needed to resolve their dispute if they hoped to preserve the region's independence.[12] Although he greatly admired ʿAbd al-ʿAziz and his religiosity, he did not want anyone's political ambitions to interfere with the good of the *umma*. He was particularly worried that internecine feuds might provide the European powers with a pretext for intervention.

But following the establishment of the Mandates in the early 1920s, Sharif Husayn's privileged relationship with Britain could no longer be taken lightly. When he rejected Rida's project for building an alliance among the various rulers of the Arabian Peninsula, enmity grew between the two men. It was not long before Rida condemned Sharif Husayn for siding with, and relying on, a non-Muslim colonial state in order to remain in power.[13] For Rida, the so-called king of the Hijaz was nothing more than a sellout who condoned the British Empire's oppression of Arabs and Muslims in exchange for personal gain.[14] Thus, by 1923, Rida had already begun calling on other Arabian emirs to rescue the Hijaz from the grip of Hashemite rule. At the time, he regarded Imam Yahya

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of Yemen—a Zaydi (Shiʿi) Muslim—as the most suitable candidate for the task because, much to Rida's regret, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz seemed unwilling to become involved in Arab affairs.[15]

The circumstances that finally caused Rida to lend his full support to the Saudis resulted from Sharif Husayn's self-proclamation as caliph two days after Atatürk abolished the institution in March 1924. This event confirmed Sharif Husayn's arrogance in the eyes of Rida, for whom the offense had a particular significance. The question of the caliphate had been central to Rida's reformist agenda. In a sense, it encapsulated his hopes for the rejuvenation of the Islamic community. He envisioned a modern-day caliph, freely chosen by the ʿulama through a process of deliberation, whose ideal character, complete devotion, and extensive knowledge of both profane and religious sciences would make him an exemplar of balanced reform. As the supreme interpreter (*mujtahid*) of Islam, this caliph would lead all Muslims on the path to progress and unity. Nothing could contradict these noble objectives more than Sharif Husayn's arbitrary appropriation of the title of caliph. Beyond his betrayal of Arab solidarity and independence, the sharif had now desecrated Islam and had disrespected the *umma* and endangered its future. For Rida, this was intolerable.

Incidentally, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz began launching attacks on the Hijaz a few months later, in September 1924. Rida could not have asked for better news: he had found his hero and would support him wholeheartedly. From that moment on, Rida became, along with Shakib Arslan (d. 1946) and Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, one of the most influential and steadfast partisans of ʿAbd al-ʿAziz outside of Arabia. As Rida saw it, the sultan of Najd was rendering all Muslims worldwide a much-needed service. The Hijaz and its two holy cities were the focal point of the *umma* and were too symbolic of Islamic unity to be left to a usurper with poor religious credentials. Rida claimed that Sharif Husayn was guilty of heresy (*ilḥād*) on a number of counts, such as ruling according to his whims, forbidding his Najdi enemies to perform the pilgrimage, and imposing extra-Islamic taxes on both the local population and foreign pilgrims. He had even violated a prophetic hadith by monopolizing bread production in Mecca and selling the loaves at a price no one was allowed to dispute.[16] In stark contrast, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz came to represent everything Rida expected from a Muslim ruler. His commanding leadership and staunch commitment to Islam were exactly what the post-Ottoman Muslim world needed: "England feels that one of the greatest

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dangers to her policy in Arab or Islamic countries is the existence among the Muslims of a strong emir, especially if he believes in his religion, adheres to it, and is backed by a people of true faith, like Ibn Saʿud and his people."[17] In sum, the nascent Saudi state was Rida's best hope for the reemergence of Muslim greatness and political power in a colonial order. It could lead the renaissance of the *umma*, exemplify balanced reform (perhaps becoming its political arm), and prove all secularist reformers wrong.

As months rolled by, the connection Rida drew between religious assiduity and political power gained in credibility. ʿAbd al-ʿAziz's saga was indeed a success story. Within a few years, the sultan of Najd conquered and became king of the Hijaz, united the rest of northern Arabia, and gained recognition from Western powers while escaping "some of the ruptures of direct colonial rule."[18] Although Atatürk had achieved similar results in Turkey through a highly secular agenda, Rida was adamant that God rewarded orthodoxy and orthopraxy with greatness and success in this world. Yet he would not have supported a ruler whose religious rigorism could become an impediment to progress. One of the reasons he had so much admiration for ʿAbd al-ʿAziz was that the latter was flexible and willing to adopt the technological dimension of modernity, if only to ensure the consolidation of his state. Because no other Arab leader approached King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz's level of greatness, independence, and religious purism tempered by pragmatism, Rida indefatigably supported his actions, justified his decisions, and defended him against his Hashemite and pro-Hashemite detractors.[19]

But Rida could not support the Saudi king without also supporting the Wahhabi scholars who gave him legitimacy. Thus, he spared no effort in deflecting criticism away from the Wahhabis' understanding of Islam and, at the same time, from the king's religious entourage. He agreed to publish (and sometimes add commentaries to) any text that celebrated the orthodoxy of the Wahhabi movement, whether the document in question was modern or premodern. He did not wish to appraise all of his sources critically or to place them in context, nor did he always want to explain their relevance to the contemporary situation. He was satisfied to expose his readers to pro-Wahhabi literature, regardless of its origins, its author, or the reason for which it had been written in the first place.

The problem was that Rida was not dealing with a mere intellectual abstraction. The Wahhabi movement had a history that spanned more

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than 150 years and involved numerous actors whose interpretation and implementation of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab's thought varied depending on their status, their level of education, and the context in which they lived.[20] Supporting the concrete manifestations of the Wahhabi movement proved to be a considerable challenge given the infamous reputation of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab and his epigones since the eighteenth century. Indeed, as the Saudi conquests progressed, Rida received a growing number of letters from readers of *al-Manar* who worried about the Wahhabis and their seizure of the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. In one case, a man wrote to ask whether or not the Ikhwan—the religiously indoctrinated Bedouin force of King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz—had destroyed the enclosure (*ḥujra*) in which the tomb of the Prophet is found as well as the green dome on top of it: "Should not the Islamic world be infuriated by such actions if they have indeed occurred? And if the Ikhwan took into consideration the feelings of the Islamic world in this matter and refrained from [committing] these actions, then what should we make of the numerous things that have been written about this [rumor]?"[21] Rida wrote that he considered the question ludicrous and not worthy of an answer, but he nonetheless replied that the Ikhwan had probably not razed anything around, or on top of, the Prophet's tomb. He explained that the chamber and its dome were not a mosque and, therefore, did not constitute a case for which demolition was required.[22] Rida buttressed his contention by saying that, when the Wahhabis first conquered Medina in 1803, they had not destroyed the building. Yet he acknowledged that they had had the intention to do so and that they probably would have demolished it had two Wahhabis not died in the process.[23]

In this instance, as in many others, Rida's efforts to rehabilitate the Wahhabis betrayed a certain discomfort. He knew what the Ikhwan and the religious scholars of Najd were capable of, and in a self-defeating élan, he admitted that his interlocutor's fears were historically founded. In other words, the fact that Rida strove to defend the Wahhabis so energetically does not mean he always admired them. It rather reveals the extent to which the Wahhabis alarmed Muslims worldwide, forcing him to react proportionally. He understood very well the potentially adverse effects of Wahhabi zeal, and his publications on Wahhabi-related matters contain many signs of uneasiness and reservation. He often acknowledged the existence of fierce exaggerators (*ghulāt*) among the Wahhabis, but he

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strove to downplay their importance by stressing that King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz was a reasonable man.[24] In 1921 he mentioned their relative ignorance (*ḍaʿf fī-l-ʿilm*) and overzealous religious practice (*shadīd al-ghulw fī-l-ʿamal*).[25] He once again acknowledged the Najdis' religious militancy (*tashaddud fī-l-dīn*) in 1926 but argued that their attitude was better than the undeclared resignation of other Muslims.[26] On several other occasions, he intimated that the Wahhabis were prone to extremism, but he asked his readers to overlook this negative side. For him, it was better either to judge the Wahhabis on the basis of their pragmatic and moderate political leader or to accept the fact that some fanaticism was better for the *umma* than the erosion of Islamic identity.

Even the extreme behavior of the Ikhwan was a necessary evil. In the mid-1920s, their military importance was such that Rida had little choice but to overlook or condone their excesses so as not to jeopardize the success and legitimacy of ʿAbd al-ʿAziz's victories in the Hijaz. One particularly controversial event forced Rida into a corner. In 1924, during the first phase of the conquest of the Hijaz, the Ikhwan captured the city of Taʾif, plundered it, and killed hundreds of its inhabitants. Despite the appalling news, Rida could not condemn ʿAbd al-ʿAziz's warriors. Although he expressed regret, he argued that such actions happened in all wars and were generally the result of mistakes or personal grudges. He reminded his readers that this type of mishap had even happened to the most righteous Muslims, including the Companions of the Prophet, whose errors had also led to the killing of innocent victims.[27]

Fortunately, the Ikhwan did not represent a permanent source of controversy. Once most of the Saudi military conquests were over and as soon as King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz decided to turn against his unruly Wahhabi troops, Rida readily supported their elimination.[28] The individuals who proved to be more problematic in the long run were the religious scholars of Najd. Rida was aware that their views could be equally counterproductive and detrimental. The Saudi king would be able to achieve great things in Arabia—but only as long as the ʿulama did not sabotage his progressive reforms. Here, the difference between Salafi theology and balanced reform was evident. Even though the Wahhabis were Salafi in creed, they often ignored the significance of modern science and opposed modernist ideas. Of course, "wrong" conceptions of Islamic theology had to be combated—in that sense, the Wahhabis were reformers, too. But they were not

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proponents of a *modernist* or *balanced* type of reform, as Rida and others understood it.[29] The Wahhabis' goal was to uncover and eliminate heresies for the sake of Salafi orthodoxy, not for the sake of civilizational progress. In fact, Wahhabi scholars were wary of the Islamic modernist movement. In the first half of the 1920s, the Wahhabis who were familiar with Rida's work—among them Ibn Maniᶜ, ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz al-Sirami, and Ibn Sahman—did not hesitate to criticize his propensity toward innovation, theological rationalism, and tolerance of religious error. They considered Rida to be more of an ignorant and misguided thinker than a Salafi.[30]

It did not take long before Rida began to struggle with this problem. In a private letter to his friend Arslan dated November 11, 1926, he described a project concerning two ancient Hijazi buildings: the house in which the Prophet was born and the house in which his first wife, Khadija, had lived.[31] Rida was hoping to turn these two houses into specialized schools for training hadith experts and Islamic missionaries. He also wished to make the sites accessible to pilgrims so that they could learn that the glorification of a building other than a mosque was un-Islamic, even if it was the house in which the Prophet had been born. In this letter, he related how he broached the topic during a meeting with King ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz in Mecca. The latter told him the project would not be feasible and would cause a major commotion unless the ᶜulama of Najd could be persuaded to accept it. According to Rida, the king told him: "Write me what you have just said. I will send [your proposal] to so and so among [the ᶜulama] and will ask them to agree."[32] Rida sent the proposal, but in the meantime, a group of pilgrims from India had begun to venerate the houses and had turned them into objects of Islamic devotion. Due to the ensuing controversy, the king caved in to the rigorist ᶜulama and rejected Rida's project. The two sites were destroyed, even though they contained no tomb and did not technically need to be demolished. Rida lamented the lost opportunity to teach millions of pilgrims about the true nature of *tawḥīd* and *shirk*.

The religious scholars of Najd did more than oppose innovative projects. Some also rejected the very ideas on which Rida based his brand of Islamic reform. In 1927, the Najdi scholar ᶜAbd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Saᶜdi wrote a letter to *al-Manar* asking Rida to prepare and publish a study on a crucial matter—namely, the alleged spread and growing popularity of heretical teachings among the Egyptian elite.[33] What al-Saᶜdi had in mind were not only the books of al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd that were sold in

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Cairo but also the ethical underpinnings of Islamic modernism itself. In his letter, the Najdi scholar told Rida how distressed he was to see signs of freethinking and disbelief (*kufr*) in the Egyptian press and religious works. More specifically, he denounced a recent Qurʾanic exegesis in which an Egyptian modernist, Tantawi Jawhari (d. 1940), prompted people to learn sciences and philosophy. The reason the *umma* declined, according to Jawhari, was that such ideas had fallen into oblivion. But for al-Saʿdi, this contention was a preposterous distortion of the truth. It was precisely these foreign philosophical ideas that had caused the downfall of the Muslims. He even cast doubts on the purity of Rida's discourse: "Some of my companions have told me that your *Manar* contains something like that."[34]

The balanced reformer in Rida must have been highly disappointed to encounter such inflexibility. How could the Saudi state flourish and become a post-Ottoman beacon of progress if unsophisticated Wahhabi scholars like al-Saʿdi were intractable? In his reply, Rida mentioned that he had perused Jawhari's exegesis for a few minutes and concluded that the work was commendable because it invited Muslims to learn natural sciences (*ʿulūm al-kawn*), which could only make Muslim states stronger. To claim that these sciences contradicted the scriptures amounted to defaming the religion of God:

> It is necessary that you distinguish between natural sciences, which we invite [people] to learn, and philosophy, both ancient and modern. Philosophy consists of opinions and theoretical thoughts whereas natural sciences are an expression of the science by which God gave benefits to His creation, such as water, steam, air . . . , the advantages of electricity—which include the telegraph, the telephone, and more—as well as amazing products like war machines for the land, the sea, and the sky.[35]

As a moderate exponent of Salafi theology—that is, as a self-proclaimed Salafi willing to compromise on certain issues to further the reformist cause[36]—Rida nonetheless argued that allegorical interpretations of the scriptures (*taʾwīl*) were sometimes apropos because without them many Muslims would have abandoned their religion. To survive in the modern era, the message of Islam needed to be articulated in a way that was consistent with scientific discourses. He thus acknowledged that his own exegesis included elements of *taʾwīl*, as al-Saʿdi suggested, but he claimed that it

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was in the best interest of modern Muslims. Rida was obviously concerned that some Najdi scholars might not grasp the social and political significance of his reformist efforts. However, he appears to have hoped that his contact with King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz would allow him to influence the Wahhabis and help them overcome their self-defeating rigidity. Indeed, at the end of his reply Rida mentioned that he took it upon himself to write to the king about the necessity of balanced reform and that he intended to mail him ten copies of *Tafsīr al-Manār* so that Wahhabi scholars could learn from it.

Rida's Disciples in the Hijaz

Above all, the success of the new Saudi state depended on a type of expertise in modern statecraft that most Wahhabi scholars either lacked or distrusted. The Kingdom of Hijaz, Najd, and Its Dependencies, as it was then called, was in dire need of technological knowledge and human capital. The matter cried out for planning because in the second half of the 1920s the kingdom was hardly more than a chieftaincy struggling with a growing debt, meager revenues, and a host of political challenges. King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz had only a limited number of advisors and technocrats with experience in or aptitude for state affairs, administration, and nation building. They either had been educated abroad or had worked in the Hijazi public sector under Sharif Husayn. Most of them were from other Arab countries.[37]

Rida was well aware of the situation, which is why he raised the issue in *al-Manar* and asked his readers worldwide to help the young Saudi state with their knowledge of industrialization, warfare, and economics.[38] But the problem was not merely one of modern expertise, or lack thereof. Beyond its institutional and economic underdevelopment, the Saudi state continued to suffer from its controversial religious image outside of Najd—a fact that had political and economic repercussions. Newspapers in Beirut, Jerusalem, Cairo, and elsewhere still decried the Wahhabis, religious incidents contributed to the deterioration of the kingdom's relations with neighboring countries, and the conquest of the Hijaz coincided with a decline in the number of pilgrims and the amount of revenue they generated.[39] Rida's efforts to rehabilitate the Wahhabis were intended to counterbalance these weaknesses, but a literary campaign alone could not suffice. The Wahhabis themselves had to adopt a more balanced approach

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to reform, and that meant the Saudi state needed help at the religious level as well. Yet Rida was not about to make such an admission, nor did he want to admonish the Najdis and their king publicly through *al-Manar* and the Arab press, as he later admitted in 1934.[40] The delicate matter of providing religious advice and assistance to the Wahhabis (whom he was at pains to portray as excellent Muslims) had to occur through private channels; otherwise, their reputation might suffer even more.

A number of balanced reformers who were Salafi in creed and had ties to Rida recognized the need to support the nascent Saudi state in situ, and Rida played a central role in the events that unfolded. Between 1926 and 1928, he facilitated the transfer of some of his closest disciples, including al-Hilali, to the Hijaz. In most cases, he introduced them or recommended them to King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz, who then appointed them to key positions in the religious and educational institutions of Mecca and Medina. Considering the context in which these transfers occurred, Rida was not merely thinking about placement for his pupils; he was also looking for ways to help the Saudi state from within. Once in Mecca and Medina, his disciples tried to bring their Wahhabi hosts in line with the ideals of the balanced reform movement and, at times, provided them with the credibility they lacked among foreign Muslims and native Hijazis who feared the "Wahhabization" of the holy cities.

This was a major concern when the Saudis organized an Islamic Congress in Mecca during the summer of 1926. At the time, King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz was attempting to convince the religious elite of the Muslim world that his conquest of the Hijaz was both legitimate and beneficial to the *umma*.[41] Some of those among the foreign delegations that accepted the Saudi invitation vehemently opposed the Wahhabis' control over Mecca and Medina. One particularly sensitive question was whether the Saudis would tolerate differences of ritual in the Hijaz or whether they would simply enforce their views on others. The tension in Mecca was palpable. One prominent Egyptian delegate reported how he witnessed a group of Wahhabis abusing a foreign pilgrim who had opened his prayer by invoking the Prophet instead of God.[42] In late June, the controversy of the *mahmal*—the traditional Egyptian procession bringing the black embroidered cloth (*kiswa*) that covers the *kaʿba* in Mecca—caused even greater tension and strained the relations between Egypt and the Saudi state. This even led to violence when some Wahhabis assaulted the procession for its use of musical

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instruments. Several Egyptian newspapers reported the events and criticized the excessive religious purism that was now taking over the Hijaz.[43]

It was under these circumstances that Rida made the trip from Cairo to attend the Islamic Congress as an independent participant. He did not travel alone: at least two of his disciples accompanied him in 1926. They went to Mecca for the pilgrimage, which coincided with the congress, and they established themselves in the Hijaz afterward. Other disciples moved to Arabia some time later. Al-Hilali, for instance, arrived in Arabia in June 1927 during the *ḥajj*.[44] Overall one can trace the presence of at least eight of Rida's religious protégés in the Hijaz, though five of them stood out as a more significant and cohesive group. Two of these five were graduates of Rida's school for the training of reformist preachers and missionaries, Dar al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshad, which operated on the island of Ruda in Cairo from 1912 to 1914.[45] The others came to know each other either through Rida's private lessons or through personal connections. In the late 1920s, these men saw themselves as a group of Salafis who were part of a small but relatively influential avant-garde of balanced reform in the Hijaz.[46]

Perhaps the most famous member of this group was Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar (1894–1976), scion of the great Syrian family of Salafi scholars, who had studied with Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and other major ʿulama in Damascus.[47] In 1920, he had undertaken a mission to Najd on behalf of Faysal, the Hashemite king of Syria for whom Rida served as an advisor. In fact, it was Rida who had orchestrated the plan and had nominated al-Bitar as envoy to Riyadh to speak with ʿAbd al-ʿAziz about the possible unification of all the emirs of the Arabian Peninsula. Al-Bitar, however, never made it to the capital. He had to cut his trip short for fear of being killed by the Ikhwan of Najd, who tended to regard Syrians as heretics.[48] Nevertheless, his mission had given him the chance to correspond with ʿAbd al-ʿAziz on behalf of Rida and to develop contacts within the private school system in Medina. He was, therefore, no stranger to the Hijaz and its new ruler when he arrived in Mecca to participate in the Islamic Congress with Rida in 1926. This may explain, in part, why he was the first member of the group to be recruited by King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz. Among other positions, al-Bitar served on the committee for reform of the education system at the holy mosque of Mecca, became professor and supervisor there, and was later chosen as director of the new Islamic Institute (*al-maʿhad al-islāmī*) in Mecca.[49]

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Another renowned member of the group was Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi (1892–1959). Born in Egypt, al-Fiqi was the son of one of ʿAbduh's classmates at al-Azhar. He himself studied there from 1904 to 1917. In 1926, he founded the pious association Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya in Cairo with the purpose of calling people to *tawḥīd*, propagating the Sunna, and purifying society from innovative Islamic practices and creeds.[50] Al-Fiqi was close to Rida. He worked for some time at the Manar Press, and by his own avowal, he was intellectually indebted to Rida and his brand of reform. He called himself Rida's pupil (*tilmīdh*).[51] Although information about al-Fiqi's transfer to the Hijaz is scarce, he probably left Cairo for Mecca in 1928 and stayed until 1930 or 1931.[52] There he became president of the newly created Meccan Department of Printing and Publication (*raʾīs shuʿbat al-ṭabʿ wa-l-nashr bi-Makka*). He also worked as a teacher and supervisor of the faculty at the holy mosque in Mecca, in addition to establishing *al-Islah*, the first modern Islamic periodical in the Saudi state. The journal was modeled after *al-Manar*, and Rida confided that he met with al-Fiqi in 1928 to give him advice about editorship.[53]

The third member of the group was ʿAbd al-Zahir Abu al-Samh (1882–1951), the same scholar whom al-Hilali had met and helped in Alexandria in 1922. A native Egyptian, Abu al-Samh was older than his colleagues and, therefore, had been able to attend the *majālis* of ʿAbduh during his youth. He worked in a primary school in Suez for some time and then returned to Cairo to become a student at Rida's Dar al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshad, where he later became a teacher and gave classes in Qurʾanic recitation (*tajwīd*) as well as calligraphy. He subsequently moved to Alexandria, worked as a private tutor, began preaching in his small mosque in Raml, and participated in the founding of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya with his friend al-Fiqi. When Abu al-Samh went on the pilgrimage in 1926, Rida recommended him to King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz. The king immediately hired him and named him chief imam and *khaṭīb* (one who delivers the sermon) at the holy mosque in Mecca. Like al-Fiqi, he also served as professor and supervisor of the faculty there. Abu al-Samh spent the rest of his life in Saudi Arabia but died in Paris while on his way to the United States to receive treatment for kidney disease.[54]

The fourth member of the group, Muhammad ʿAbd al-Razzaq Hamza (1890–1972), left for Mecca under similar circumstances. Born in Egypt, Hamza studied at al-Azhar and then at Dar al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshad. When

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the latter closed, he continued to attend the lessons that Rida gave in his house, all the while assisting him as a proofreader for the Manar Press. Interested in modern sciences ranging from engineering to astronomy, he immersed himself in ʿAbduh's ideas of balanced reform and later became an avid reader of Ibn Taymiyya. In 1926, he undertook the pilgrimage with Rida and Abu al-Samh (who was also his brother-in-law). Rida introduced him to King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz and recommended him as a qualified scholar. Hamza briefly went back to Egypt, but he returned to the Hijaz with his family a few months later and took the position of imam and *khaṭīb* for the morning prayers at the Prophet's mosque in Medina. He also became teacher and supervisor of the faculty. Hamza spent the rest of his life in Saudi Arabia and died in Mecca.[55]

Al-Hilali, the last of the group,[56] no longer lived in Egypt when he chose to join his colleagues. In 1923, after a year of local proselytism, he continued his quest for the science of hadith and left for colonial India, where he spent fifteen months in various cities from Delhi to Calcutta. In Lucknow, he studied sections from all six canonical collections of hadith under the guidance of an older scholar of the Ahl-i Hadith movement named Husayn ibn Muhsin al-Ansari al-Yamani (d. 1925). In Mubarakpur, located in today's state of Uttar Pradesh, he studied with ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri (d. 1935), another major figure of the Ahl-i Hadith and author of a famous commentary on al-Tirmidhi's hadith collection.[57] Then al-Hilali moved to Zubayr in southern Iraq, where he claims to have enjoyed a good life. He taught Arabic and religious sciences in a local school, earned a decent salary with free room and board, and married the daughter of the Mauritanian-born scholar Muhammad al-Amin al-Shanqiti (d. 1932), who was the school's founder and director.[58]

By the summer of 1927, al-Hilali's friend Abu al-Samh had already sent him several letters suggesting that he leave Iraq to join the rest of the group in the Hijaz. Al-Hilali made no such plan, but while on his way to the pilgrimage, he stopped in Cairo and met with Rida. When the latter learned that his disciple was bound for Mecca, he wrote to King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz and recommended that he hire the young Moroccan and make good use of his religious knowledge.[59] After completing the pilgrimage and after hesitating to abandon the comfort of southern Iraq, al-Hilali finally decided to remain in Mecca, even though the Saudis had not yet promised him any position. For four months, he lived in the unfurnished and torrid fifth

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floor of a house that belonged to the royal family—where Abu al-Samh also resided—until the Saudis appointed him teacher and supervisor of the faculty at the Prophet's mosque in Medina. He thus started working with his friend Hamza, whom he knew from Cairo.

The most striking feature of these promotions is the gap among the candidates' uneven experiences and the relative ease with which they acceded to key positions. Rida's recommendations appear to have given his disciples a real advantage over potential competitors. Al-Hilali mentions the case of one rival, a native Tunisian named Salih ibn al-Fudayl al-Tunisi, who had taught at the great Umayyad mosque in Damascus and had traveled to Medina in hopes of becoming imam and *khaṭīb* at the Prophet's mosque. Despite his credentials, al-Tunisi managed to become only a professor, which, according to al-Hilali, amounted to being a mere preacher (*wāʿiẓ*).[60] He never became a supervisor, probably because no one could vouch for him or attest that he was Salafi in creed. (Incidentally, Hasan al-Banna had also hoped, in vain, to get a teaching position in the Hijaz in the late 1920s.[61])

According to one Saudi scholar, it was King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz who initially asked Rida to send him qualified ʿulama for the holy cities.[62] This is likely to be true, for in 1940 al-Fiqi also wrote that Rida had sent his disciples to teach Islam in the Hijaz "on request of the king."[63] But even if the king was the original mastermind, it is clear that the agreement was mutually beneficial. Rida could only applaud the contributions made by his protégés to the success of the Saudi state by helping the religious scholars of Najd while promoting balanced Islamic reform where it was most needed.

Assistants to the Wahhabis and Advocates of Islamic Modernism

One should not overstate the degree of influence Rida's disciples were able to exert in the Hijaz. After all, they were few in number and remained subordinate to senior Wahhabi scholars. They were also subject to the whims of the Saudi emirs. Nevertheless, the nature of their jobs and the tasks they performed in the Saudi state reveal an interesting situation. Not only did they find themselves in the most prestigious and cosmopolitan religious institutions of the Hijaz, but also they enjoyed a rather high degree of

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authority for scholars who had daily and direct contact with the population. By comparison, top Najdi scholars usually worked more privately in the holy cities. A good example of how King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz redefined their role in the newly occupied province is the case of ʿAbdallah ibn Hasan Al al-Shaykh (d. 1958), a descendant of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab with whom al-Hilali and his colleagues often interacted. Ibn Hasan was the designated *qāḍī* and imam of the Saudi forces during the conquest of the Hijaz. Following the takeover of Mecca in 1925, the king named him chief imam of the holy mosque, thus confirming that the prestigious position called for a prominent candidate. By 1927, however, Abu al-Samh had already replaced Ibn Hasan, and the latter had been promoted to the rank of chief *qāḍī* (*raʾīs al-quḍāt*) for the entire Hijaz.[64]

The king may never have intended to keep Ibn Hasan as imam, but other reasons might explain this revised division of labor. Nominating a foreign disciple of Rida was politically useful, for it allowed ʿAbd al-ʿAziz to avoid domestic disputes and bypass the rivalries that existed between Hijazis and Najdis, who competed for offices.[65] Moreover, considering that Saudi legitimacy in the Hijaz was not yet well established, the king and his advisors were adroit in selecting an Egyptian imam like Abu al-Samh, who was less likely to be perceived as a Wahhabi parvenu and to foster a climate of distrust among locals and pilgrims who visited Mecca from different parts of the world. Likewise, it was to the Saudi ruler's advantage to remove Ibn Hasan from the holy mosque and appoint him to a less visible but more powerful position. To use an expression commonly found in biographical dictionaries, Ibn Hasan became the government's "listening ear and keen eye." He served on high committees and monitored the activities of religious scholars in the holy cities from behind the scenes. He continued to teach in Mecca—but only in his house and in a private capacity.[66]

Rida's disciples were often in a better position than the Najdis to teach and to confront Muslims whose beliefs did not conform to the norms of Salafi theology. In his memoirs, al-Hilali provides several examples of the services he and his colleagues rendered to the Wahhabis. When he moved to Medina in late 1927, he found that one of the professors at the Prophet's mosque was Alfa Hashim (d. 1932), a Sufi scholar from Mali who was a chief member of the Tijaniyya order. Therefore, he wrote a report in which he expounded thirteen of the Tijanis' errors and handed it to Ibn Hasan. According to al-Hilali, the chief *qāḍī* was repulsed: "He read [the report] and

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his skin shivered. He said: 'God forbid! God forbid, there is someone in this world who believes such things.' I said: 'Yes, and he is right here with you in Medina.' "[67] Ibn Hasan summoned Alfa Hashim to answer charges of deviant beliefs, but due to his ignorance of the Tijaniyya, the chief *qāḍī* reportedly chose to let al-Hilali conduct most of the interrogation. We are told that Alfa Hasim eventually repented and agreed to write a paper listing all of the alleged errors of his Sufi order so that the Wahhabi authorities could print it, distribute it, and use it to warn other people against the Tijaniyya.

In this case, al-Hilali acted as a religious watchdog on behalf of Najdi scholars who were less familiar with certain Sufi doctrines. But on several other occasions, Rida's disciples served as agents of religious change and intermediaries between the population and the Saudi state. In Medina, for example, the Committee for Commanding the Good and Prohibiting Evil (*hayʾat al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahī ʿan al-munkar*), which monitored the population's mores and religious assiduity, reported its findings to al-Hilali and Hamza, who then advised the local emir on how to deal with the situation. Hamza eventually presided over that group.[68] In Mecca, Abu al-Samh headed a similar committee, and al-Bitar played a major role in defining the duties of its members.[69] Al-Hilali and Hamza were also instrumental in the establishment of a new program for training the guides for pilgrims in 1928. The objective was to inculcate a Salafi conception of *tawḥīd* in these guides (most of whom were native Hijazis) and to teach them proper rules regarding the visitation of the Prophet's mosque. The head of the Directorate of General Education in Mecca put al-Hilali and Hamza in charge of establishing the curriculum, choosing the books, appointing the instructors, and supervising the classes.[70] In that capacity, both men ensured that the instructors followed the program. Al-Hilali claims he challenged a recalcitrant instructor who had adulterated certain passages of a book during his classes. Al-Hilali allegedly exposed each of the instructor's mistakes until the latter became speechless.[71]

Two stories in al-Hilali's memoirs suggest that the Wahhabis derived some benefit from the ability of Rida's disciples to present themselves as objective and authoritative scholars. The first concerns the destruction of a site. There was, in the open courtyard of the Prophet's mosque in Medina, a well surrounded by bushes and a palm tree.[72] According to al-Hilali, ignorant people called this place Fatima's garden (*bustān Fāṭima*) because the daughter of the Prophet had allegedly planted the tree. Many believed that

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the holy Zamzam spring streamed underground all the way from Mecca and that every year on the day of ʿAshura it reached the well in Fatima's garden. On that day, people headed to the site and sought blessings by kissing the well and taking water from it. In other circumstances, they also sought blessings from the palm tree or its dates or from the bushes.

These were precisely the types of beliefs and behaviors that adherents of Salafi theology abhorred: seeking blessings from something or someone other than God was a blatant violation of *tawḥīd*. An Islamic modernist like Rida might have added that such beliefs were irrational, primitive superstitions that did not live up to the sophisticated monotheistic thought of Islam, but he would have nonetheless agreed with the purely scriptural argument that seeking blessings from a tree or a well was a clear case of *shirk* that contradicted the Qurʾan and the Sunna. The Wahhabis did not need to consult Rida's disciples to reach that conclusion. Chapter 9 of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* (The book of divine unicity), which specifically deals with the offense of seeking blessings from trees and rocks, already gave them the necessary proofs. Nevertheless, al-Hilali contends that Ibn Hasan, the chief *qāḍī*, asked him and his colleagues about the proper way to deal with this problem. The Wahhabi scholar wished to know whether they would support his plan, which was to fill the well, uproot the tree, and remove all traces of Fatima's garden by leveling the ground. When al-Hilali and the others agreed that it was necessary to rid the mosque's courtyard of any temptation of *shirk*, the chief *qāḍī* took action. Al-Hilali relates: "[Ibn Hasan] wrote to King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz, informing him of our opinion and asking him for the permission to carry out [the elimination of Fatima's garden]."[73] If the story is true, then one wonders why the opinion of foreign Salafis mattered in the first place. It seems that the Wahhabis were not looking for advice as much as they were looking for outside support to legitimize a controversial project.

The second story is of greater import. In late 1926, the Saudis opened their first nontraditional secondary school in Mecca, called the Islamic Institute (*al-maʿhad al-islāmī*), with al-Bitar as its director. In addition to forming believer-citizens of sound creed, the Saudis wished to train primary school teachers for the country's towns and villages. The Islamic Institute, they hoped, would thus help to consolidate the new state through education. However, it failed to attract and retain students. To increase enrollment and attendance, the king ordered that an allowance

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be given to every student. But the measure proved ineffective. In 1927, the problem had become so serious that the Directorate of General Education decided to close the institute temporarily. After important changes, it reopened in 1928 under a different name: the Saudi Scientific Institute (*al-maʿhad al-ʿilmī al-saʿūdī*).[74]

This reorganization took place shortly before the arrival of al-Hilali and Hamza in Mecca in 1929. (Due to tensions between them and the emir of Medina, both men left their original positions. Hamza was reassigned to Mecca's holy mosque, and al-Hilali asked to be transferred there as well.) Once in the city, they received an offer to take a second appointment and join the institute's faculty. The Directorate for General Education had already hired several other disciples of Rida to teach there: Abu al-Samh, al-Fiqi, al-Bitar (who was no longer director), and ʿAbd al-Rahman Abu Hajar (a lesser-known Algerian associate of Rida).[75] Course offerings were relatively broad and included basic engineering, trigonometry, history, geography, and English, though religious sciences were an important part of the curriculum.[76] Al-Hilali, for his part, taught Arabic, Qurʾanic exegesis, hadiths, and, in his own words, "the unicity of God [*tawḥīd*] in the manner of the people of hadith, not in the manner of the people of *kalām*."[77]

This time the institute thrived. No doubt the decision to further raise the students' allowances contributed to this sudden success, but al-Hilali offered a complementary explanation that is plausible despite its self-congratulatory nature. According to him, the foreign professors played a key role in turning the institute around. With their greater competence and credibility, they succeeded where Najdis had failed—namely, in gaining the trust of local Hijazis. He is right that the Wahhabis were often unwelcome in Mecca and Medina. He relates the case of a young Najdi named Ibn Mansur, who had become imam in a village near Medina and seemed unable to enforce his authority. Al-Hilali portrays him grabbing the cigarette out of the mouth of a Shiʿi who had refused to drop it and knocking on people's doors before dawn to wake them up for prayer. The locals quickly turned violent toward him and lodged complaints to their emir.[78] Al-Hilali contends that the difficulties of the institute were partly due to a similar aversion to Najdis. The decision to hire foreign professors in greater numbers had allowed the people of Mecca to overcome their original perception of the school as nothing but "a Wahhabi institute that teaches the Wahhabi doctrine to its pupils."[79]

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Nevertheless, from a theological standpoint Rida's disciples were largely in agreement with the Wahhabis. They distinguished themselves by their better understanding of the challenges of modernity, their appreciation of science, and their balanced approach to reform—balanced in the sense that it sought to reconcile "true" Islam with the need for civilizational progress. In the first issue of *al-Islah*, which he founded in Mecca in 1928, al-Fiqi declared that the journal would be the voice of the reformers (*ṣawt al-muṣliḥīn*) and that one of its primary purposes was to help the progress of the Saudi state as much as possible.[80] Rida's five main disciples, all of whom except Hilali wrote in *al-Islah*, made no secret of their desire to promote Islamic modernism. But they had to walk a tightrope, for they could not risk antagonizing the religious or political establishment of the very state they were trying to help. One telling example is the initial compromise to which al-Fiqi consented in 1928. When he broached the idea of creating *al-Islah* to King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz, the latter gave his assent but demanded that the journal avoid dealing with political issues altogether.[81] This meant that the reformist program could not be as broad or multifaceted in Mecca as it was in Cairo. There were clear taboos. Still, *al-Islah* did tackle topics that were inherently political, such as the importance of independence and freedom as well as the need for national industries (*al-ṣināʿāt al-waṭaniyya*) as a means to end economic dependency and prevent foreign domination. Obviously, what the king did not want was al-Fiqi and his collaborators meddling with Saudi politics.

More difficult was the challenge of winning over the Wahhabis without arousing their ire. Like Rida, al-Fiqi knew that some Najdi scholars could be so wary of innovation as to reject intellectual and scientific advancements, thereby hindering the progress of the Saudi state and, by extension, the progress of the *umma*. Hence, many of *al-Islah*'s articles focused on the acceptability of modern science and technology. Part of al-Fiqi's agenda was to praise and discuss Rida's Qurʾanic exegesis, particularly its sections on science and civilizational progress.[82] But as if to allay the suspicions of his readers, al-Fiqi added a "nativist" tinge and argued that scientific breakthroughs historically originated in the Middle East. Therefore, they could not be deemed Western innovations. Planes, tanks, and submarines, as well as mechanical and electrical devices such as the telegraph, were all perfectly acceptable because medieval Muslim scholars had first developed the science behind them.[83]

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At times, the journal even engaged in an ambivalent discourse that condemned modern achievements while simultaneously promoting them. In a manner uncharacteristic of the balanced reform movement, one anonymous author—possibly al-Fiqi—offered a scathing critique of the wicked conceptions of modern civilization (*al-ʿumrān al-ʿaṣrī*) and scientific progress (*taqaddum fī-l-ʿulūm*) that prevailed in Egypt and the other supposedly great kingdoms of the region, excluding, of course, the Saudi state. This sweeping condemnation of development as perversion may have pleased certain scholars from Najd, but the same article described the antidote to these evils in a distinctly modernist idiom. It spoke of an Islamic notion of constitutionalism for guaranteeing the common good and presented God's revelation as a form of sociology *avant la lettre*—that is, as a source of knowledge about the moral ills and social diseases that lead to crime and indecency, a knowledge that any government must possess if it wishes to ensure social peace.[84]

Although al-Hilali did not write in *al-Islah*, he, too, tried to render the Wahhabis more amenable to change. In Medina, he became involved in what he referred to as an "odd" altercation that took place at the Prophet's mosque while he was still supervisor of the faculty. A number of teachers had gathered around him and Hamza, and they were discussing various scholarly questions when someone raised the issue of the earth: Is it round or flat? Al-Hilali and Hamza proceeded to explain that without a doubt the earth is round. They supported their claim by naming some of the Muslim authorities who had confirmed this, including Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Their answer apparently left the group puzzled, for the teachers started to whisper among themselves. When the prominent Najdi scholar ʿAbdallah ibn Bulayhid (d. 1940) later came to the mosque, the skeptical teachers asked him the same question. Without hesitation, Ibn Bulayhid replied that only untrustworthy Muslims who tamper with the scriptures through rational speculation and metaphorical interpretation could dare to deny that the earth is flat.[85]

Here, Ibn Bulayhid was defending a literal reading of Qurʾan 88:20, which refers to the earth as a flattened (*suṭiḥat*) surface. For al-Hilali, the misinterpretation of this verse had damaging consequences: it was an affront to the scriptures, to science, and to the Muslim community as a whole. That the Qurʾan speaks of a flattened surface does not contradict the fact that the earth is round, al-Hilali explained in a later article. It

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rather means that God made the earth a convenient place of rest where humans can be at ease, as though they were on a bed or a carpet.[86] In the late 1920s, however, Ibn Bulayhid held a radically different view. Upon hearing his answer, the teachers of the mosque informed him that their two foreign supervisors had argued the exact opposite. Furious, Ibn Bulayhid fustigated al-Hilali and Hamza for pretending to be knowledgeable and for having taught such nonsense. While striving to explain to Ibn Bulayhid that he was wrong, the two disciples of Rida mentioned several examples, including the natural cycle of day and night and the fact that the sun sets in Riyadh half an hour before it does in Medina. Al-Hilali reminisced: "We had another proof clearer than all [the preceding ones], but we were afraid of telling him: if a traveler heads west in a straight or almost straight line and keeps that direction without changing it, he shall return to the place he came from."[87]

Without even hearing that last argument, Ibn Bulayhid lost his temper and ordered al-Hilali and Hamza to repent. The news of their failure to convince Ibn Bulayhid must have spread because the previously skeptical teachers started treating the two foreigners with disdain by slapping them and laughing at them. Others made sure to remind them of their faulty logic: if the earth was a sphere floating in space, then the seas would be unstable, rocks and animals would slip, and people would be walking upside down. As supervisor of the faculty, al-Hilali kept warning the teachers against the threat of obscurantism, but most of them continued to side with the senior Wahhabi scholar. Al-Hilali finally settled the issue when he received his personal library, which had been shipped to him from Iraq. After a careful search, he found proof texts supporting his argument in the writings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim. He underlined the relevant passages in red and sent them to Ibn Bulayhid, who calmed down but nonetheless refused to admit his error. When al-Hilali later met another prominent Wahhabi scholar named Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Latif Al al-Shaykh (d. 1948), the latter acknowledged that Ibn Bulayhid was mistaken and assured al-Hilali that not all the ʿulama of Najd believed in the earth's flatness.[88]

This account is probably true. Al-Hilali was a professor at the Islamic University in Medina when he wrote his memoirs in 1971 and could hardly have wanted to disparage the Wahhabis on purpose. Moreover, Ibn Bulayhid's views on the shape of the earth are well established.[89] In the

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eyes of balanced reformers in the late 1920s, the incident was alarming. Not only did a prominent Wahhabi scholar allege that the earth is flat, but also he told the professors at one of the Muslim world's most cosmopolitan religious institutions that it is heretical to think otherwise. Such a blunder would not go unnoticed and could well undermine the credibility of the Saudi state abroad. Ibn Bulayhid may have been the first Wahhabi scholar to ride a Ford through the desert, as al-Khatib's journal, *al-Fath*, reported in 1926, but his lack of intellectual refinement could easily overshadow his interest in automobiles.[90] This was a problem that pro-Saudi reformers based in Egypt could only try to cover or deny. Rida's disciples, who operated directly in the Hijaz, could at least try to solve the problem at its root.

In this particular instance, Rida and his disciples appear to have coordinated their efforts. While al-Hilali and Hamza tried to reason with Ibn Bulayhid in Medina, Rida sought to control damaging rumors through *al-Manar*. In an article about education and the dangers of stagnation (*jumūd*), Rida criticized flat-earthers and enemies of science. However, he insisted that the Wahhabis could not be counted among these ignoramuses and that rumors to the contrary verged on absurdity:

> It has come to my ears that one of the most revered and well-read ʿulama of Najd advocated anathema [*takfīr*] against anyone who professes that the earth is round. This has startled me because Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab, the imam of the Najdi revival, as well as other scholars [of this movement], have stipulated that they do not accuse anyone of being an infidel except for a breach of consensus about definite religious questions. But this is not a religious question, and there is no [religious] consensus about it. [This has also startled me] because the greatest Hanbali imams from whose books the shaykh [Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab] and his successors derived [their] Najdi religious renewal are Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim. The latter has mentioned, in some of his books, that the earth is round. So, if the rumor about this [Najdi] scholar were true, would he charge [Ibn Qayyim] with unbelief?[91]

Rida did not say outright that the rumor was false, but he was being disingenuous. Whether or not the unnamed scholar from Najd was Ibn Bulayhid, Rida knew that prominent Wahhabis did sometimes oppose

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scientific knowledge, however startling it may have been. Ibn Bulayhid, for one, did not seem to have read, remembered, or accepted Ibn Qayyim's arguments about the roundness of the earth. This is precisely why Rida and his disciples had to campaign on two fronts. It was one thing to pretend that the Wahhabis were ideal Muslims—but quite another to make this rhetoric a reality.

Consequences for Reform and the Tolerance of Theological Difference

In essence, Rida was not a doctrinaire advocate of Salafi theology. When it came to pragmatic issues such as the defense of Islam's vitality in the modern world or the acquisition of political power by a Muslim entity, he was willing to downplay Salafi orthodoxy for the sake of Islamic unity and the common good. In the mid-1920s, however, his support to the Saudi state and his efforts to rehabilitate the Wahhabis prompted him to reconsider some of his views on the necessity of theological tolerance. Rida now had strong political reasons to attack Muslims who either strayed too far from the creed of the *salaf* or persisted in their refusal to accept the Wahhabis. His growing intolerance of theological diversity and the reasons behind it are nowhere more evident than in his polemical writings against the Shiʿis. In a book originally published in 1929, he explains that he was once willing to work with the balanced reformers among them, but he admits that the situation changed when God granted victory to the Saudi state in the Hijaz.[92] One Shiʿi scholar whom Rida had previously considered a partner in the Islamic reform movement was Ahmad ʿArif al-Zayn (d. 1960), editor of the Lebanon-based periodical *al-ʿIrfan*. When al-Zayn started questioning Rida's enthusiastic support to the Wahhabis, who were openly anti-Shiʿi, Rida accused him of bigotry (*taʿaṣṣub*) and held him responsible for causing disunity among Muslims.

Rida was even more critical of Muhsin Amin al-ʿAmili (d. 1952), another reform-minded Shiʿi scholar from Lebanon. Among other things, al-ʿAmili had made the mistake of criticizing the Wahhabis and Ibn Taymiyya in the aftermath of the Saudi conquests of the mid-1920s. Again, Rida cleared himself of any blame. The burden of fostering Muslim unity and

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preventing dissension fell on those who opposed Salafi theology, not the other way around:

> I invite all rational Muslims, especially those among the moderate Shiʿis who are sincerely devoted to Islam, to join us in a courageous renaissance in order to revivify the pure monotheist creed [*li-iḥyāʾ ʿaqīdat al-tawḥīd al-khāliṣ*], condemn those who worship the dead, be they from among the family of the Prophet or from the rest of the virtuous friends of God [*awliyāʾ*], and condemn [those who] cling to the teachings of the intellectually stagnant Shiʿi jurists.[93]

Although he fell short of censuring all Shiʿis, Rida left them few options. Pan-Islamic unity was still conceivable, but it had to be on Salafi terms. With the emergence of the politically promising Saudi state, he no longer believed that the promotion of Islamic ecumenism was appropriate. Hence, there was no use in tolerating the errors of "unorthodox" Muslims when they remained blind to the genius and merits of King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz or failed to see that the Saudi state was a latter-day version of the Rashidun caliphate that would allow the *umma* to recapture its past grandeur.[94] Given Rida's influence within Islamic modernist circles, there is little doubt that his change of heart made it more difficult for other balanced reformers to claim to be Salafi in creed unless they sided with the Wahhabis and adopted a more exclusivist attitude toward non-Salafis.

Rida's disciples contributed to this shift. In 1927, in the context of heightened communal tensions following the Wahhabis' heavy-handed efforts to impose their version of Islam on the Shiʿi population of the kingdom, *al-Manar* published a series of seven anti-Shiʿi articles written by al-Hilali.[95] These articles derived from a debate that had taken place in the mid-1920s between al-Hilali, who was then living in Iraq, and a Shiʿi scholar from Basra named Mahdi al-Kazimi al-Qazwini (d. 1939). Al-Qazwini insisted that it was lawful to tend to and visit shrines, particularly the tombs of Shiʿi imams, provided these buildings did not become objects of worship. Al-Hilali, for his part, dismissed any type of reasonable compromise and argued that there could be no lenient interpretation of the numerous Sunni hadiths forbidding the erection of buildings over tombs. The timing for such views was propitious, so it is no wonder that Rida

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was eager to publish al-Hilali's work right away.[96] He later referred to it as "the debate between a Shiʿi scholar and a Salafi scholar [*al-munāẓara bayna al-ʿālimayn al-shīʿī wa-l-salafī*]" and used it in his own polemic against al-Zayn and al-ʿAmili.[97] The Saudis saw advantages in al-Hilali's anti-Shiʿi discourse as well. Soon after he moved to the Hijaz in 1927, al-Hilali rewrote his articles into a somewhat harsher tract, which he presented to the king. The latter handed the writing to Ibn Hasan, the chief *qāḍī*, and ordered the printing and distribution of a thousand copies.[98]

In Mecca and Medina, efforts to gain the trust and confidence of Wahhabi scholars appear to have pushed Rida's disciples toward a more uncompromising stance on the question of conformity to Salafi theology. There was little room for ideas that were distasteful to the Najdi religious establishment, and lapses did not go unnoticed. In December 1928, al-Fiqi was forced to apologize to the readers of *al-Islah* for an article written by the Egyptian scholar Muhammad ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Khuli (d. 1931), who was based in Cairo.[99] Al-Fiqi took responsibility for failing to properly review the article before publishing it, and he urged subscribers to correct their own issue of the journal by hand so as to remove al-Khuli's controversial word choices. He asked them, among other things, to disregard the statement that "the Qur'an is the work of God, not the work of Muhammad [*al-Qurʾān ṣanʿ Allāh lā ṣanʿ Muḥammad*]," which suggested that the Qurʾan was created.[100] This mea culpa proved to be a turning point for the journal. From that moment onward, strict orthodoxy became the leitmotiv of *al-Islah* until its final issue in July 1929. Articles about Marconi and the Wright brothers gave way to articles about Hanbali and Najdi religious scholars. *Al-Islah* became so entrenched in its own dogma and so intolerant of other doctrinal views that in 1929 one Damascene scholar pressured the great Shakib Arslan to ask al-Fiqi to moderate the language of his journal for the sake of Muslim unity.[101]

This was to no avail. Once Rida and his disciples gave their unconditional support to King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz, they could no longer accept open disagreement about the Wahhabis, even when it came from fellow Salafis. Al-Bitar, for instance, expressed his shock at reading the critical comments of Muhammad al-Amin al-Shanqiti, the senior scholar who was based in southern Iraq and for whom al-Hilali had worked. Evidently, al-Shanqiti felt that the pro-Wahhabi campaign had gone too far, for he published an article in which he cast doubt on al-Bitar's apologetic portrayal of the

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Najdis. Unwilling to turn a blind eye to religious intimidation, al-Shanqiti argued that it was wrong to pretend that the Wahhabis were tolerant and that they refrained from anathematizing Muslims. In his rebuttal, which Rida published in *al-Manar*, al-Bitar justified his argument through textual, though ahistorical, evidence. He provided quotes from the Qurʾan without any mention of how Wahhabis actually interpreted them or whether they had ever acted on them. Rida wrote an appendix and added his voice to that of his disciple. Although he again conceded that some Najdis had a tendency to exaggerate, he accused al-Shanqiti of being unfairly critical of the Wahhabis and thus of playing the game of the British.[102]

What is particularly interesting in this case is that al-Bitar and Rida went on the offensive against someone who was close to their entourage and who shared most of their views. Born in Mauritania, al-Shanqiti had traveled to Egypt in 1900 and met ʿAbduh through a mutual friend.[103] Al-Shanqiti taught briefly at al-Azhar, and this is probably where Abu al-Samh, who was a teenager at the time, got to know him. Indeed, Abu al-Samh claims that al-Shanqiti was the man who first introduced him to the Salafi creed.[104] In Iraq, al-Shanqiti had his students read *al-ʿAqīda al-wāsiṭiyya*, Ibn Taymiyya's well-known theological treatise, until local critics complained to the authorities, accused him of being a Wahhabi, and forced him to modify his curriculum.[105] He should have been a natural ally of Rida and his associates, but his caution toward the rehabilitation of the Wahhabis made him something of a pariah. Implicit in al-Bitar's rebuttal was the conviction that al-Shanqiti was not, and could not be, a real Salafi in creed, regardless of his views on *tawḥīd* or his interpretation of God's attributes. The fact that he was al-Hilali's father-in-law also proved irrelevant.

All this suggests that Rida's campaign to support the Saudis and rehabilitate the Wahhabis occurred at the expense of certain ideals common to balanced reformers. This is not to say he repudiated Islamic modernism altogether. Two years before his death, he wrote *al-Waḥī al-muḥammadī* (The Muhammadan revelation), in which he reaffirmed his commitment to a progressive type of sociopolitical and religious reform suitable to modernity.[106] Yet he undoubtedly considered the strengthening of the Saudi state's power and independence to be more important for the good of the *umma* than was the promotion of certain modernist principles. In the Hijaz, his disciples faced greater constraints. As much as they tried to promote

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the ideals of the *Manar* school of reform while appearing religiously credible in the eyes of the Wahhabis, this balancing act often proved unsustainable. They had little choice but to subordinate some of their own wishes to the commands of the Najdi ʿulama and, ultimately, to those of the Saudi emirs. Moreover, Rida's disciples had incentives to remain in the good graces of their superiors. Besides their relatively prestigious positions, they received financial advantages. Al-Hilali mentions that he and his colleague Hamza earned a monthly salary of ten gold pounds when they started working in Medina. According to him, life was so cheap in the city that only three gold pounds were sufficient to sustain an entire household for a month and live a good life.[107] Sources also indicate that of all the supervisors at Mecca's holy mosque, Abu al-Samh earned twenty gold pounds a month, which was two to three times higher than the salary of anyone else on the payroll.[108]

That Rida's disciples allowed themselves to be influenced by the religious ethos of the Wahhabis (to an extent that Rida probably never expected) is, therefore, understandable. They may have contributed, somewhat indirectly, to what David Commins has called "the taming of Wahhabi zeal."[109] But all things considered, the Wahhabis had more impact on Rida's disciples than vice versa. Although Hamza and Abu al-Samh are the only two who settled in the kingdom permanently, the others all went back for extended periods of time or maintained close relations with top Wahhabi scholars. Al-Bitar, for instance, stayed in the Hijaz from 1926 to 1931 and then returned to Damascus and Beirut as a teacher. However, he relocated to Saudi Arabia for a second time in 1944 for a three-year stint as head of Dar al-Tawhid, a school founded that year in Taʾif with the purpose of training *qāḍī*s and other religious specialists.[110] Al-Hilali also went back in the late 1960s.

Al-Fiqi was the exception, in that he returned to Cairo and never reestablished himself in the Saudi state. Yet he was no less tied to it. In 1950, when Rida's nephew went to a Cairo hospital to visit the Wahhabi scholar Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al al-Shaykh (d. 1969) during the latter's convalescence from a minor surgery, he found the recovering shaykh in the company of al-Fiqi, who was reading to him.[111] (Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, who became chief mufti of Saudi Arabia soon after, was blind since childhood.) This was not an accidental meeting. Al-Fiqi was keen to cultivate connections with the religious and political elite of the Saudi state, for both his own benefit and that of his pious association, Ansar al-Sunna

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al-Muhammadiyya. During an official visit to the association's headquarters in Cairo in 1954, Prince Nayif (d. 2012) told the assembled members: "If [the Saudi diplomat] ʿAbdallah Al Ibrahim al-Fadl is our political ambassador in Cairo, [then] you are our religious ambassadors everywhere."[112] There was indeed a fair amount of cooperation. As head of the association, al-Fiqi took on writing projects on behalf of the Saudi royal family and specialized almost exclusively in the critical edition of old Wahhabi and Hanbali texts—a task with which Hamza sometimes helped him.[113]

Considering that Rida, too, published his share of critical editions and apologetic works, it might seem unfair to single out al-Fiqi's intellectual endeavors as different from those of his mentor. But there is an important distinction to be made between the two men's approaches to reform: Rida tended to be a purist when it came to matters of creed, but he remained a modernist with respect to sociopolitical and legal reform. Many of his Wahhabi-inspired disciples, however, came to disregard the modernist part of this equation and lost sight of their mentor's higher objectives and broad reformist program. This was the case with al-Fiqi, who, unlike Rida, came to focus almost exclusively on religious purism. Likewise, Abu al-Samh wrote little original material and limited his role to teaching proper creed and ritual. Soon after Rida's death, he published an ode in Rida's honor in the official Saudi newspaper, praised him as an independent thinker, and mentioned *al-Waḥī al-muḥammadī*, Rida's last book, as a source of guidance.[114] Yet Abu al-Samh seems to have had no reformist ambitions other than to purify Islam from its past accretions by uncovering and eliminating heresies. He is mostly remembered for his loud and melodic voice as well as his oratory talents as a preacher.[115]

It could even be argued that in the long run the mission to Arabia backfired. Perhaps the most telling indication of this is the fact that Hamza disowned Rida and distanced himself from Rida's religious thought. In a 1958 book defending the reliability of the science of hadith, Hamza disapproved of Rida's inconsistent commitment to religious purism. He criticized his late mentor for failing to accept the literal meaning of several hadiths about the signs of Judgment Day, such as the coming of the Antichrist and the return of Jesus to this world. In his Qurʾanic exegesis, Rida had expressed doubts about these eschatological hadiths, whose narrators, he believed, reported them figuratively. For Hamza, this skepticism was unacceptable because it implied that the pious ancestors could have erred

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in their understanding of what the Prophet had said. In other words, Rida was guilty of having doubted the authority of the *salaf*. He had been led astray, Hamza explained, because he had studied under ʿAbduh, who had himself fallen under the influence of European thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Herbert Spencer, and Gustave Lebon. Because of their fascination with positivism, both ʿAbduh and Rida came to doubt supernatural phenomena and, consequently, were prone to interpret the scriptures metaphorically whenever they appeared to contradict science. Hamza thanked Rida for what he learned from him, but he claimed that he had to oppose Rida on issues for which the truth was manifest.[116]

In effect, Rida's disciples became creatures of the Saudi state, at least as long as they lived inside its borders. Once they agreed to work within the religious and educational structures of the Hijaz, they lost some of their intellectual freedom—and at times their physical freedom as well. Judging from the writings of al-Hilali, some members of the group were taken aback by the arbitrariness of Saudi rulers, whose priority, they thought, should have been to trust the judgment of religious scholars.[117] But Rida's disciples had to measure their own acts and words. They were unable, for instance, to counsel King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz with the same distant authority and forceful tone that Rida, who wrote from Cairo, could use in his private letters.[118] Al-Hilali recounted that in the late 1920s he and his colleagues asked Abu al-Samh to write a letter to the king protesting the creation of a holiday celebrating his accession to the throne (*ʿayd al-julūs*). They felt that this innovation was blameworthy, but the idea of broaching the subject created a clear sense of uneasiness among them. Al-Hilali, Hamza, al-Fiqi, and seven other men worked together to tone down Abu al-Samh's letter. The king allegedly read the final version without becoming furious, and al-Hilali praised him for that.[119]

This atmosphere of subservience was conducive to the transformation of Rida's disciples into palace ʿulama, but it also fostered frustration. In 1930, al-Hilali became so displeased with the situation that he decided to leave. The circumstances leading to his departure from the Saudi state—a topic he carefully evaded in his published writings—date from a controversy regarding his appointment to the Saudi Scientific Institute in Mecca in early 1929. Some passages in his private collection of poems offer hints as to what happened. At the time, al-Hilali and Hamza had been nominated by the Consultative Council (*majlis al-shūrā*), over which Prince Faysal

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presided while his father was out fighting rebel Ikhwan forces on the Iraqi border. Later, an irritated King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz journeyed to Mecca and was informed of the council's initiative. For reasons that are not clear, the king summoned the ʿulama and told them that the two foreigners could not remain professors at the institute. Thus, both al-Hilali and Hamza were dismissed and transferred to Mecca's holy mosque as mere teachers.[120]

The king's seemingly inexplicable decision annoyed al-Hilali so much that he decided to leave Arabia. After having been supervisor at the Prophet's mosque in Medina, he could not accept his demotion to an inferior professional status in such an arbitrary manner. One local notable suggested setting up an appointment with the king so that al-Hilali could apologize. But al-Hilali refused. He was not guilty of anything, he said, and the king fired him without good reason and without proper investigation. Al-Hilali thus left for Jeddah, where he wanted to board a ship to India. However, he ran into unexpected problems when he found that he was unauthorized to leave the country. For several weeks, he tried to negotiate his departure with the authorities, but the king apparently refused to grant him an exit visa. The chief *qāḍī* wrote to al-Hilali and explained to him that he was not allowed to leave because King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz had appointed him as a teacher in the holy mosque in Mecca. Therefore, it was mandatory for him to take the position. They exchanged other letters, but the conclusion was always the same: al-Hilali had to obey the king and go back to work in Mecca for at least a couple of months before thinking of leaving the Saudi state.

Exasperated, al-Hilali decided to ask a North African employee of the French consulate in Jeddah for help. In his official capacity, the staff member was able to reach the king and obtain an authorization for the Moroccan expatriate to leave Arabia. Al-Hilali lamented: "I told [the employee] that I hated to seek the help of the French against an Islamic government."[121] It must indeed have been frustrating, if not absurd, to have to resort to the diplomatic services of colonial France in order to regain the right to travel and to extricate himself from the grip of the very country that was expected to lead the Muslim world forward.

Hamza, for his part, decided to obey the king. Because he probably had no better place to go, he swallowed the insult, chose to stay in Mecca as a mere teacher, and hoped for a favorable turn of events in the future. He did in fact regain the king's confidence: a few years later he became a teacher at Dar al-Hadith, a school founded by Abu al-Samh in Mecca in 1933 for

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the training of religious scholars. Hamza eventually became director of this institution. In 1950, when a Saudi Scientific Institute was established in Riyadh, he was also hired to teach *tafsīr* and hadiths.

In 1957, al-Hilali confessed to a Moroccan reporter that his first stay in the Hijaz "did not please him," without explaining how or why.[122] Tensions between the Wahhabis and the foreign reformers were perhaps greater than individuals were willing to admit publicly. In a private typescript, al-Hilali mentioned that his relationship with Ibn Hasan, the chief *qāḍī*, was in fact thorny and ended on bad terms. When al-Hilali departed for India, he heard that the chief *qāḍī* had spoken ill of him in an assembly. According to the rumor, Ibn Hasan told his fellow ʿulama that the religion and knowledge of foreign scholars should not be trusted and that al-Hilali was particularly unreliable because he had sought the help of the Christians (the diplomatic services of France) and sided with them against the Muslims of the Saudi state. Whether or not the rumor was true, it is likely that Ibn Hasan was displeased with al-Hilali's insubordination and recourse to the French consulate. In Mecca, Abu al-Samh lauded his Moroccan colleague and tried to save his reputation but without great success. Al-Hilali wrote to Ibn Hasan from Bombay, but the chief *qāḍī* apparently never replied.[123]

***

Despite the mixed results of the rehabilitation campaign and the difficulties that some of his disciples encountered, Rida remained devoted to King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz until the very end. For all his occasional faults, the Saudi ruler was, in the eyes of Rida, the best available Muslim statesman, and his kingdom offered the best prospect of becoming the political arm of the balanced reform movement. Rida knew firsthand the difficulty of putting reformist ideas into practice: it required money as well as political support. In 1914, the failure of his own reformist seminary, Dar al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshad, had been a major disappointment. He complained that no political leader at the time—not even the Ottomans in Istanbul—had agreed to fund it and ensure its survival.[124] He remained bitter about the experience and kept the conviction that the success or failure of balanced reform hinged to a large extent on the collaboration of political authorities. The success of the Saudis in the mid-1920s opened up a new vista of possibilities.

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That said, the significance of his campaign for the rehabilitation of the Wahhabis must not be exaggerated or misconstrued. Even though it facilitated a shift away from the moderate dimension of Islamic reform, it did not mark a drastic change and did not affect all balanced reformers. Strictly speaking, it had a direct effect on only a limited number of activists, though some of them—Rida included—wielded considerable religious and intellectual clout. The case of al-Fiqi and Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya, for instance, reminds us that the influence of the Saudi state and the Wahhabi scholars on Egyptian Salafis dates from the 1920s, not from the 1960s or 1970s, as is often argued. In due course, all the Muslim activists whom Rida sent to Arabia drifted toward religious purism, but the transition did not necessarily happen overnight. Al-Hilali, for one, was not yet ready to jettison the principles of Islamic modernism by 1930. As the next chapters will show, it took him several more decades to become a full-fledged purist Salafi.

One must also refrain from thinking of this episode in terms of a convergence between Salafism and Wahhabism, which is a conceptually flawed way of accounting for the change. To do so would be to assume that Salafism was already established as a distinct category and that the term *Salafi* referred exclusively to balanced reformers from outside the Saudi state, such as Rida and his disciples. This is a misconception. The Wahhabis, consequently, did not steal, hijack, or borrow the label *Salafi*. They instead continued to use the term to refer to their own theological stance, as they had done on occasion before. Ibn Bulayhid, the prominent Wahhabi scholar who insisted that the earth was flat, provided one example in a 1926 interview in *al-Manar*. In an attempt to deny that the Wahhabis were sectarian nonconformists, he claimed: "The people of Najd are all following the *madhhab* of imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, so they are Salafis in creed (a derivative of *salaf*) [*hum salafiyyat al-ʿaqīda (nisba ilā al-salaf)*] and Hanbalis in law [*ḥanābilat al-madhhab*]."[125] This declaration is identical to the way in which previous Wahhabis sometimes chose to articulate their religious identity.

It would be equally wrong to assume that Rida and his disciples bestowed the label *Salafi* on the people of Najd. Although Rida usually referred to the Najdis as Wahhabis, despite disliking the term, he sometimes did introduce them as Salafis.[126] But from a theological perspective, there was nothing unusual about this. More significant was Rida's apologetic effort to equate the balanced reformers' understanding of Salafi

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theology with that of the Wahhabis of Najd. In 1927, to throw the detractors of the Saudi religious establishment off balance, he wrote that the Wahhabis had become a large group in Egypt, with adherents among the religious scholars of al-Azhar and other religious institutions, thanks to the guidance of *al-Manar*.[127] Claiming that his journal promoted a Wahhabi approach to Islam was a bold and ironic way of siding with the Najdis while making the point that they did not deserve to be stigmatized. But it was also indicative of the blurring of self-images and religious values. In reality, Rida and other adherents of what he called "the reformist doctrine of *al-Manar* [*madhhab al-Manār al-iṣlāḥī*]"[128] had already started to condone and even adopt some of the Wahhabis' more uncompromising attitudes toward religious reform. Among these activists, the meaning and implications of being a Salafi were changing.

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3
Purist Salafism in the Age of Islamic Nationalism

Irrespective of Rashid Rida's efforts to rehabilitate the Wahhabis, two conceptual developments became noticeable in the 1920s. The first was the emergence of the abstract noun *salafiyya*, which translates as "Salafism." The earliest incontrovertible example I have found dates from November 1926 and comes from the Algerian journal *al-Shihab*.[1] In sources from the Arab East, the earliest example I was able to locate dates from February 1929. In an article about theology published in *al-Islah*, Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar wrote that the unicity of God's names and attributes was "the chief concern and pinnacle of Salafism [*raʾs amr al-salafiyya wa dhurwa sanāmihā*]."[2] He used the same terminology in an undated personal letter to King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Al Saʿud, which, on the basis of internal evidence, must have been written sometime between 1926 and 1932. In it, al-Bitar reports that he had a conversation with Rida during which the latter sang the praises of the Saudi state and referred to it as a "religious government whose Salafism presents itself in the personality of the king [*hādhihi al-ḥukūma al-dīniyya tatamaththalu salafiyyatuhā fī shakhṣ al-malik*]."[3] The abstract noun *Salafism* was not at all common in the 1920s—it is difficult to find more than a handful of examples—but its presence in written Arabic sources indicates a gradual shift toward a more encompassing category that extended beyond the boundaries of Islamic theology.

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Indeed, the second conceptual development of the 1920s was a growing tendency to use the label *Salafi* in a legal sense. In 1924, for example, Rida described himself in the following terms: "I am a Salafi Muslim; I do not blindly follow any particular religious scholar and am not a partisan of any particular *mujtahid*."[4] Rather, he claimed to use scriptural proofs when dealing with debatable legal issues, as the *salaf* had done. Other reformers in Rida's circle started using the term in the same way, as did Taqi al-Din al-Hilali when he signed his articles in *al-Manar*. Below his name, al-Hilali added: "Independent Salafi scholar who is absolutely not clinging to any of the [legal] schools."[5] The logic behind these statements is easy to see: if one agrees that the pious ancestors were the best Muslims in history and if one agrees that the complex legal *madhhab*s that started to take shape in the eighth century were unknown to them, then one should conclude that modern Muslims should return to the simpler and more authoritative legal methodology of the *salaf*. This, in a nutshell, was the idea that Rida wished to convey when he acknowledged his passage from being a Hanafi to being a Salafi.[6]

What was new was not the representation of the pious ancestors as wise Muslims able to reach informed legal opinions on their own due to their sound judgment, their rejection of *taqlīd*, and their intimate knowledge of both divine and prophetic sources. This was an old theme, as was the idea of a non-*madhhab* or pre-*madhhab* approach to Islamic law. The real change was rather the unambiguous application of the epithet *Salafi* (historically a theological marker) to individuals who dealt with legal matters unencumbered by the canons of the traditional schools of Islamic jurisprudence. As a result, *Salafi* gradually became a reference to an adherent of a broader religious orientation called Salafism, as opposed to a mere adherent of the doctrine of the forefathers in creed (*madhhab al-salaf*).

In claiming to be a Salafi in law, however, one did not necessarily have to dismiss the entire system of classical *fiqh*. As is still the case today, self-proclaimed Salafis disagreed on the desirability of tolerating the traditional schools of law. This ambivalence is perhaps best captured in the work of Abu Yaʿla al-Zawawi, Rida's Algerian disciple, whose religious précis, *al-Islām al-ṣaḥīḥ* (The true Islam), was published in 1927 by al-Manar Press. Al-Zawawi argued that the existence of various legal schools was an innovation, but he nonetheless maintained that all four

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Sunni *madhhab*s were virtuous and correct. None of them could be considered better than the others. At the same time, however, he called for the organization of a conference or the creation of a committee of ʿulama (something resembling the French Academy, he wrote) to reconcile the various legal *madhhab*s in Sunni Islam. His ultimate goal was the promotion of a single school of thought for all Muslims, "a pure ancestral *madhhab* [*madhhaban salafiyyan maḥḍan*], be it in creed or in worship and other religious practices."[7] In other words, he deemed the traditional schools of Islamic law acceptable—in the short term, at least—but only as long as they commanded no loyalty—that is, as long as they ceased to function as *madhhab*s.

Generally speaking, throughout Islamic history the relative lack of uniformity regarding legal theory and practice seemed more acceptable to Muslim scholars than differences of opinion regarding theology, which proved more decisive in determining whether someone was a Muslim or an infidel. But how much legal diversity could the self-proclaimed Salafis of the mid-twentieth century tolerate without contradicting the idealized picture of the united community of the pious ancestors? And to what extent could they push for greater legal uniformity among Muslims without causing backlash and deepening factional rifts? These religious questions took on unprecedented political significance in the decades following the First World War, when the spread of European colonialism made the *umma* appear weaker and more fragmented than ever. Once again, the difficulty of striking a balance between religious unity and purity seems to have caused al-Zawawi and other Salafis to vacillate regarding legal normativity. This, of course, contributed to the conceptual vagueness surrounding Salafism.

But the major reason why the concept proved ambiguous in the mid-twentieth century was that Salafism was still being shaped as a category. It remained quite clear that *madhhab al-salaf* was a synonym for theological fideism, usually referring to neo-Hanbali theology,[8] but *salafiyya* was a newer and broader concept that had to be defined—hence the appearance of the first deliberate attempts at delineating its contours during this period.[9] We have a prime example in a book completed in 1939 by the Muslim scholar and publisher Muhammad Munir al-Dimashqi (d. 1948), a Cairo-based balanced reformer in the tradition of Muhammad ʿAbduh and Rida.[10] What is striking about the opening section of the book is Munir's

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intentionality: he is fully conscious that he is providing a conceptual framework. He begins with a linguistic analysis of the word *salaf* and then goes on to explain what it means to be a Salafi in creed and in law.

At the theological level, Munir contends that at the core of what makes a Salafi a Salafi is the neo-Hanbali conception of *madhhab al-salaf*: describing God as He described Himself and as the Prophet described Him (that is, by affirming divine attributes in their plain sense, without alteration, metaphorical interpretation, denial, and anthropomorphism and, above all, without modality). This, he explains, was the position of Ibn Taymiyya, as confirmed by the Palestinian Hanbali scholar al-Saffarini (d. 1774). But he quickly warns his readers against false Salafis: "You will be convinced that the agitators [*al-mushāghibīn*] of our time among those who lay claim to the doctrine of the forefathers and ascribe themselves to it are not in accordance with [any of] that."[11] He does not name names, but he suggests that false Salafis are those who create dissent within the Muslim community by nagging their coreligionists about theology and booby-trapping them with questions such as "Where is God?" and "Is God above His throne or is He sitting on it?" What seems to trouble him is not whether Muslims are able to give orthodox answers to these questions—he does not even address this issue—but rather that self-proclaimed Salafis are delving into opaque theological matters, trying to sniff out heresies at the expense of Islamic unity. Today's *umma*, he says, needs mutual love and understanding (*al-taḥābub wa-l-tafāhum*), not mutual hatred or division. Evidently, he disliked the theological stringency and intolerance of some Salafis, as discussed in the previous chapter.

At the legal level, however, Munir puts forward an unexpected definition of Salafism. He places great weight on the opinions of authoritative scholars—especially the alleged founders of the four Sunni schools of law and those who later elaborated their legal doctrines—and strives to give *madhhab*s a high epistemological stature. In his view, Muslims who invite the masses to act according to the Qurʾan and the Sunna alone, without imitating (*taqlīd*) or following (*ittibāʿ*) one of the four Sunni imams, should absolutely not be considered Salafis. How could someone infer a ruling from a Qurʾanic verse or a hadith without deferring to the superior knowledge of one of the four great jurists, who were among the later *salaf*? Munir's defense of the *madhhab*s was not intended only for laypersons. Religious scholars could not do without them either. "Where in the

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Qurʾan does [one] find the principles of legal hermeneutics and the rulings that are derived from them?" he asks rhetorically.[12] As an example, he writes that it is only through the *madhhab*s that details on when to enforce canonical punishments (*ḥudūd*) can be known.

Munir does not say if or when religious scholars should engage in *ijtihād*, nor does he discuss the qualifications that a potential *mujtahid* should have. Likewise, he does not entertain the possibility that the legal opinion of a classical jurist might go against a sound hadith. In such a case, would a Salafi have to deny the authority of the *madhhab*s and acknowledge that the Prophet's words supersede the opinion of anyone else? So he can convey more forcefully his pro-*madhhab* message, Munir prefers not to get bogged down in technical details. According to him, it is false to assert that modern Muslims can dispense with *taqlīd*, act solely according to the Qurʾan and the Sunna, and still measure up to the likes of Abu Hanifa, Malik, al-Shafiʿi, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal: "How can [one] be a Salafi while reviling the respected imams? Is that part of Salafism [*hal hādhā min al-salafiyya*]?"[13]

To contemporary readers, Munir's argument that Salafism means accepting the primacy of traditional legal institutions over the free interpretation of the scriptures may seem odd. However, this anomaly should not be taken as a sign of the many varieties of Salafism. Such a conclusion would imply that fixed definitions of Salafism already existed, thus overlooking the entire process by which the concept was constructed. Instead, Munir's outline reflects the gradual and tentative way in which the notion of Salafism emerged, including ensuing struggles over its definition. Indeed, not all conceptions of Salafism took hold. That of Munir, for example, remained marginal (or at least its legal part did).

By the end of the colonial era in the late 1950s, two main "families" of definitions could be found in Muslim reformist literature. First, there were many reformers who conceived of Salafism as a purist approach to Islam, characterized by an adherence to neo-Hanbali theology, an abhorrence of innovation, a strong commitment to the use of scriptures as proof texts, and a desire to recapture the unique truth of Islam—that is, the purported orthodoxy and orthopraxy of the pristine Muslim community. Second, there were a few Muslim activists, mostly in Morocco, who articulated a modernist understanding of Salafism that proved strikingly similar to the meaning Louis Massignon and other Western-trained academics had

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previously given to the term *salafiyya*. The earliest such example known to me comes from the Moroccan reformer ʿAllal al-Fasi's 1937 obituary of Abu Shuʿayb al-Dukkali. Al-Fasi used the abstract noun *Salafism* but linked it to the promotion of reason (*ʿaql*), the fight against stagnancy (*jumūd*), and, most importantly, the overall renaissance and uplifting of Muslim society in modern times through an enlightenment of thought (*tanwīr afkār al-kathīr*).[14] Moreover, he described Salafism more as a disposition of mind or spirit (*rūḥ*) than a specific religious epistemology or set of beliefs and practices. This was not exactly in line with how purist Salafis defined their own religious orientation.

The making of these two conceptions of Salafism bore the imprint of different, though sometimes overlapping, approaches to Islamic reform in the context of late colonialism. Each of them also reflected different imaginings of community. In the mid-twentieth century, more so than in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, the objectives of Muslim reformers went beyond religious and sociopolitical renewal to focus on independence from colonial powers. This led many of them to adopt and adapt the universal discourse of nationalism—the ideology of unity par excellence and one of the most powerful political forces at the time. Even though the idea had previously aroused suspicions among religious activists (in his younger years, for example, Rida saw nationalism as a secular and Western-inspired threat to the unity of the *umma*[15]), by the mid-twentieth century Muslim reformers had a better appreciation of its potency as an anticolonial tool and quickly made it their own. It became common for self-proclaimed Salafis, among others, to call for greater cohesion in a nationalist idiom.

Not all Muslim reformers favored the same type of national unity or cohesiveness, however. Those who were purist Salafis often built on pan-Islamic convictions and had a marked tendency to promote *Islamic nationalism* (termed *al-waṭaniyya al-islāmiyya* and *al-qawmiyya al-islāmiyya* in Arabic primary sources), a notion that emerged in the mid-twentieth century from an effort to combine a time-honored Islamic identity with a European conception of a strong and unitary nation. Islamic nationalism entailed the valorization of a unique Muslim "culture" and a primordial attachment to the *umma* as a whole, with a view to liberating it politically, regardless of how many sovereign states might emerge as a result. All of the activists who adopted this ideological outlook embraced

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religious identity politics, but some went further and insisted on the need for "cultural" uniformity, especially in the religious realm. This exclusivist form of Islamic nationalism was thus quite different from the Islamic solidarity that Jamal al-Din al-Afghani had in mind. For example, Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, the editor of *al-Fath*, asserted that Muslims formed "a single *umma* united by a single culture, a single [set of] beliefs and a single ambition"—namely, empowerment and independence.[16] The idea of a single set of beliefs was of particular interest to Islamic nationalists who had purist Salafi inclinations. To varying degrees, they hoped to strengthen all Muslims worldwide and bring them together against colonial rule on the basis of their conformity to the one true Islam of the pious ancestors. Put differently, they sought to achieve national unity and political power through the standardization of Islam according to their criteria of religious purity.

As for the reformers who became vocal exponents of modernist Salafism, they were generally interested in a narrower form of nationalism, *territorial-statist nationalism*, in which shared historical and cultural experiences shaped collective identity within nation-states in the making. This imagining of community allowed for the elaboration of local or "national" forms of Islam, which were frowned upon by purist Salafis. Although they, too, cared about the fate of other Muslims and the success of the anticolonial struggle in the rest of the *umma*, modernist Salafis tended to tailor their anticolonial and reformist message to unite specific collectives, which, in some cases, included non-Muslims. The most notable example is the Moroccan nation that al-Fasi and his modernist Salafi associates strove to define and empower. With it came the promotion of a specifically Moroccan Islam.

Of course, other reformers fell somewhere between these two poles, and still others were so purist as to refrain from adopting a nationalist rhetoric altogether (as was the case with many Salafi scholars from Najd). But the distinction between Islamic nationalists and territorial-statist nationalists, however rough, is noteworthy because it helps explain what conditions shaped the different versions of Salafism in the mid-twentieth century and, as we shall see in chapter 5, why different Salafis followed different political trajectories after independence. For the moment, however, it is sufficient to observe that anticolonial considerations loomed large in the attitudes and intellectual production of most self-proclaimed Salafis in

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the mid-twentieth century. Inevitably, this had an impact on the construction of purist Salafism. Given the overarching goal of putting an end to foreign domination and given the mobilization and "conscientization" of the colonized required to achieve such an objective, it made sense for purist Salafis to temper their inclination toward dogmatism with pragmatic considerations. The pursuit of independence pushed them to curtail somewhat their ambitions for religious purity so as not to undermine the hope of rallying the Islamic "nation" to defeat imperial powers. They needed Muslims to unite. Therefore, many purist Salafis oscillated between exclusivist and inclusivist forms of Islamic nationalism.

In this regard, the activities of al-Hilali between the 1930s and the 1950s are instructive. He was, undoubtedly, an Islamic nationalist and a Salafi of purist inclination. But rather than openly condemning other Muslim anticolonial activists whose religious views did not meet "pure" Salafi standards, he often supported them, if only momentarily. Moreover, despite his desire to purge religion of innovations and foreign borrowings, he still wished to project an image of Islam as a set of beliefs and practices that were consistent with or superior to modern values. This was a common exercise in apologetics among those who attempted to convince Western colonizers and nonreligious nationalists alike that Islam was not an impediment to progress and that believers should neither have to renounce their faith nor have to confine it to the private sphere to consider self-rule. Thus, al-Hilali still had a strong incentive to follow the path of Rida toward Islamic modernism, even though, by comparison, his views were more rigid than those of the so-called modernist Salafis in Morocco.

From this perspective, and contrary to what might be expected, the global anticolonial struggle gave many purist Salafis good reason to tone down their doctrinaire positions—if not in theory, then at least in practice. The mid-twentieth century was truly a time of contradictory trends: as much as resistance against European colonialism provided a powerful justification for those who championed the purification and standardization of Islam (Rida's campaign for the rehabilitation of the Wahhabis being one example), it also acted as a moderating influence. This explains, in large measure, why the purist Salafis of the mid-twentieth century appeared less stringent and less "purist" than their counterparts of the late twentieth century.

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The Appeal and the Perils of Religious Conformism

From the 1930s onward, a sense of disillusionment afflicted Muslim reformers who had hoped to see the young Saudi state play the role of post-Ottoman beacon of Muslim unity and revival. It soon became obvious that the Saudis were concerned primarily with their own dynastic interests rather than the interests of the Muslim community as a whole. In 1934, for example, the kingdom's ruling family chose to go to war with Yemen over a territorial dispute instead of promoting Muslim unity and independence vis-à-vis Western colonial powers. Not only did the conflict involve two of the few Muslim countries that were still free of direct colonial rule, but also it provided Britain and Italy with a pretext for landing detachments in the Arabian Peninsula and seeking involvement in Yemeni affairs.[17] Clearly, Saudi Arabia would not always align its policies with the ideals of Muslim reformers, nor could it be trusted to bring the *umma* together against imperial powers. Transnational Islamic activists would have to find other ways of promoting the cohesion and emancipation of the worldwide Muslim community.

One such activist, based in Palestine, wrote to the Cairo-based journal *al-Fath* in 1937 to advance a plan to set up an international network of committees in all regions of the Muslim world so that like-minded reformers could unite and wield enough political clout to stand up to the colonial powers and their lackeys. The author, who went by the surname of Abu Yaʿla, claimed that he had been trying for several years to rally leading reformist figures to support his project. Around 1934, he strove to persuade Rida to make this the greatest achievement of his career. Rida endorsed the idea in principle but refused to work toward its realization, pleading that he had no desire to spearhead a project that required fund-raising. By then, Rida no longer had illusions about the commitment of Muslim states and rulers to the overarching goals of Islamic reform. Because none of them was likely to finance Abu Yaʿla's project, the latter would have to raise money from various donors. Rida, it seems, had neither the energy nor the confidence to take on this task. He thus referred Abu Yaʿla to Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar, who voiced the same doubts about the financial feasibility of the project.[18]

Even though the creation of an international structure seemed too ambitious and logistically difficult to seasoned Muslim reformers, the

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dream of an Islamic bloc—a political-cum-religious Muslim front capable of pursuing the anticolonial struggle without regard for artificial political boundaries—was still very much alive. The fact that reformers had limited political resources did not discourage them from trying to foster cohesion in the religious sphere, over which they exercised more influence. Indeed, the idea of reinforcing a common Islamic identity through religious standardization, which some reformers saw as a corollary of Muslim political unity, was formally discussed. Already in 1931, the draft Organic Law of the General Islamic Congress held in Jerusalem recommended the establishment of a modern and international Islamic university in Palestine "to create conformity in Moslem culture."[19] Although a majority of delegates supported the principle of ensuring a minimum of pan-Islamic conformism, they were understandably divided about what conformity meant in practice and about the religious standards that all Muslims would be expected to follow. When Rida presented a series of recommendations as chair of the Subcommittee for Religious Advocacy and Guidance, other delegates opposed his report on the ground that it was Wahhabi-inspired.[20] Rida's increasingly purist understanding of Islam, which his friend Shakib Arslan strangely described as "a true Wahhabism, but enlightened and moderate,"[21] still aroused too many suspicions to serve as a religious paradigm.

It was against the background of these preoccupations that the concept of purist Salafism gradually took shape. Holding pan-Islamic views did not automatically make one a purist Salafi, but purist Salafis generally espoused a kind of reformism that had pan-Islamic resonance and that lent itself well to religious conformism. Their ideal of orthodoxy and orthopraxy implied the adoption of a single pure and uniform scriptural Islam devoid of divisive attributes, which would, therefore, be valid for the entire *umma*. Thus, purist Salafism grew together with Islamic nationalism, and this development was made possible, in part, because of activists and intellectuals who continued to frame a globalizing discourse and who acted as intermediaries between various groups and individuals from different parts of the Muslim world. Al-Hilali was one of them. Between 1930 and 1957, he visited no fewer than thirteen countries on three different continents, and everywhere he could, he invited Muslims to focus on their Islamic identity as a means of defeating both the obvious and the subtle faces of imperialism.

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But al-Hilali, like many others, was still a proponent of balanced reform. The appeal of Islamic nationalism and conformism did not blind him to the necessity of empowering his coreligionists and educating them on how to be modern and Muslim at the same time. Despite his commitment to orthodoxy and orthopraxy, he had no intention of jettisoning the principles of Islamic modernism. Instead, he believed that true Islamic nationalists *had* to be proponents of balanced reform, for only through balanced reform could the *umma* regain its past grandeur and thereby fulfill its historical destiny. From this perspective, the purification and standardization of Islam was perhaps more of a means than an end in itself. After all, the reformist myopia of certain Wahhabis and their unwillingness to strike a balance between religious purity and civilizational progress were precisely what al-Hilali hoped to avoid. Throughout the mid-twentieth century, he thus continued to advocate for balanced reform, at times focusing on Islamic conformism and at other times placing it on the back burner for the sake of strengthening the Islamic nation.

Let us examine in more detail how al-Hilali appreciated the appeal and perils of religious standardization. As he was about to leave the Hijaz, he hesitated between two possible destinations: colonial Indonesia and colonial India. He had corresponded with scholars from both countries but finally opted for India. Professionally, it was a sensible choice because Sulayman al-Nadwi (d. 1953), then head of the Nadwat al-ʿUlama in Lucknow, had invited him to teach Arabic at Dar al-ʿUlum.[22] On a pragmatic level, colonial India was also the easiest choice for al-Hilali because he was already familiar with the country. He had spent a little over a year there in the early 1920s, following his stay in Egypt. It was then that he had met Sulayman al-Nadwi for the first time.

That al-Hilali accepted this job offer also signals that he had some regard for the institution that hired him. The Nadwat al-ʿUlama began its activities in 1892 as an association of some thirty ʿulama who wished to reform Islamic education in British-ruled India while avoiding both excessive Westernization and religious conservatism.[23] Its famous seminary, Dar al-ʿUlum, was founded six years later in Lucknow. From the onset, the Nadwat al-ʿUlama set goals that were fully in line with those of the balanced reformers in Arab countries. Its seminary aimed at introducing pupils to modern science, but it also attempted to overcome religious divisions within the Indian Muslim community. Hence, Dar al-ʿUlum was accessible

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to any Sunni student affiliated with any legal school.[24] Given the reformist affinities between Nadwis and Arab balanced reformers, personal relationships soon developed. Shibli al-Nuʿmani (d. 1914), who preceded Sulayman al-Nadwi as head of the Nadwat al-ʿUlama, had already invited Rida to Dar al-ʿUlum in 1912.[25]

Al-Hilali arrived in Lucknow in 1930 and stayed until the end of 1933, though he returned to Iraq at the end of every school year, for he still had a family there.[26] Teaching at Dar al-ʿUlum proved to be a defining experience for him, not only because he gained the recognition of his peers and established new contacts but also because he developed skills that opened his mind to new horizons. Indeed, it was during that period that al-Hilali learned English and began to insist that Muslims needed to master both Arabic and foreign languages. Thereafter, multilingualism continued to play a major role in his intellectual life. Nevertheless, the revival of Arabic was an urgent priority in the context of colonial India. Since the late nineteenth century, a favorite theme among Muslim reformers had been to argue that no Islamic renaissance could occur without people having an adequate command of classical Arabic (*al-fuṣḥā*), which was the gateway to the Qurʾan and the Sunna. Some of them maintained that there was a direct causal link between the decline of classical Arabic and the general decline of the *umma* since the medieval period.[27]

Al-Hilali held similar views, but he framed his vision of revival in Islamic nationalist terms. In 1937, he wrote: "The Arabic language is, according to me, the sole key to the religious and this-worldly [aspects of] Islamic culture [*al-thaqāfa al-islāmiyya al-dīniyya wa-l-dunyawiyya*]."[28] As this rather vague language suggests, there were times when al-Hilali understood Islamic culture as the sum total of the features of "Islamicate civilization," in which any Muslim could take pride (including, but not limited to, the revelation itself). At other times, however, he understood Islamic culture in much more essentialist terms. A united *umma*, envisioned as a nation of sorts, would inevitably remain a multiracial entity, but it should not be a multicultural one. If Islamic culture was by definition religious and if pure Islam was to be the basis of cultural unity within the Islamic nation, then any significant intra-Islamic diversity was, in theory, both an affront to the pristine religion of the pious ancestors and a weakness that kept Muslims from becoming a powerful, organic nation. Did Shiʿis, Sufis, and superstitious Muslims deserve to be considered representative of Islamic

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culture? Al-Hilali did not think so, but he sometimes preferred to avoid the subject and even celebrated some of these Muslims when it proved beneficial to do so.[29]

In any case, the advent of a strong Islamic nation united by a common religious culture based on pure Islam required all believers to master classical Arabic. To al-Hilali, Indian Muslims' lack of familiarity with the language of revelation rendered them particularly gullible. They were prone to accept innovations and join "heretical" groups, especially the Ahmadiyya movement, infamous for the messianic and prophetic status attached to its founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908).[30] Anyone who knows Arabic, al-Hilali claimed, would realize that neither the Qurʾan nor the Sunna validated the Ahmadi interpretation of Islam:

> The existence [of the Ahmadiyya movement] is a consequence of the ignorance of the Arabic language and the reliance upon translations of religious books. I can affirm this to be true by [pointing out] that no one is inclined to believe this sect [*niḥla*] in the civilized Arab countries, despite its proselytes' efforts and in spite of the weakness of [our] religion in this era.[31]

Moreover, al-Hilali believed that classical Arabic as a lingua franca was better suited for the globalizing Muslim world than was a series of vernaculars. The cohesion of the Islamic nation depended, among other things, on efforts to generalize the use of its true national language. Al-Hilali argued, for example, that the popularity of his religious lectures in the cosmopolitan cities of Mecca and Medina in the late 1920s was due to the fact that he delivered them in classical Arabic. Whereas reputed teachers could barely get more than ten students to attend their lessons—or so al-Hilali claimed—his own classes attracted hundreds: "I did not understand the reason behind this, except that I was speaking a language which all Arabs from various regions could understand, whereas the professors who lacked an audience all spoke in their own particular dialect."[32] At Dar al-ʿUlum, he held onto the method that had proven successful in the Saudi state. There would be no dialectal Arabic and no Urdu in his classroom.

Four decades later al-Hilali claimed that he drew inspiration from the German pedagogue Maximilian Berlitz and his famous method for teaching modern languages in a lively manner, without ever using translations.[33]

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Whether or not this is true, his unusual pedagogy did raise concerns among senior members of the Nadwat al-ʿUlama. Some of them demanded that al-Hilali be fired and replaced by a professor who would use Urdu in class. Although Sulayman al-Nadwi defended him, the protesting ʿulama gained the upper hand and dismissed al-Hilali. Instead of moving out of Lucknow, however, he decided to turn his own house into an Arabic school for children. The results were apparently so stunning that four months later skeptical members of the Nadwat al-ʿUlama submitted al-Hilali's pupils to an oral and written examination, only to realize that the children's performance surpassed all expectations. The ʿulama yielded, and al-Hilali returned to Dar al-ʿUlum.

Sometime later Sulayman al-Nadwi approached his Moroccan colleague with the project of establishing a journal in Arabic to provide students with an opportunity to apply their newly acquired linguistic skills. This led to the birth of *al-Diyaʾ*, which is regarded as "the first Arabic periodical in India with some circulation."[34] Its actual founder and editor was an Indian student of al-Hilali named Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi (d. 1954), who within a few years and with the help of his mentor made a name for himself in transnational reformist circles. Sulayman al-Nadwi and al-Hilali assisted him with the editing process, and both contributed to the journal as well. Not unlike Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi's *al-Islah* in Mecca, *al-Diyaʾ* was a channel for intellectual exchange between balanced reformers locally and abroad. Published from 1932 to 1935, *al-Diyaʾ* discussed the ideals of Islamic modernism and encouraged Indian Muslims to transcend their territorial enclave and to embrace a reformist project that involved the entire *umma*.

To underline the pan-Islamic dimension of *al-Diyaʾ* and to increase its visibility, al-Hilali sent copies of it to reformers in his network. Rida, for example, reprinted the journal's first editorial in *al-Manar*. Likewise, al-Khatib often mentioned *al-Diyaʾ* in the pages of *al-Fath*, if only because al-Hilali submitted articles to him throughout the 1930s. (So did Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi, who quickly became a regular collaborator of *al-Fath*.) The reputation of *al-Diyaʾ* spread to French North Africa as well. In 1935, the Algerian reformist journal *al-Shihab*, edited by ʿAbd al-Hamid ibn Badis (d. 1940), reprinted an article by Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi about the Islamization of India.[35] It not clear whether Ibn Badis learned about *al-Diyaʾ* through *al-Fath* or through al-Hilali, who contributed to *al-Shihab* and its sister publications in the late 1920s and was, therefore, well known

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to Algerian producers and consumers of reformist literature. Whatever the case, such wide circulation was remarkable for a relatively unrefined Indian journal written in Arabic but printed in Urdu script—a flaw for which Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi apologized profusely.

Although literature and the reform of language education were among its prominent themes, *al-Diyaʾ* also promoted "Islamic culture" and raised awareness of the plight of other Muslims around the world, from Europe to Japan.[36] Islamic nationalism was never far from the minds of those who contributed to the journal, as can be seen from the impassioned plea for an organic conception of the *umma* that another young student of al-Hilali, the now famous Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi (d. 1999), made in 1934. The latter argued that despite geographic, linguistic, and ethnic differences, the Islamic world was like a single house (*ka-bayt wāḥid*) whose inhabitants shared the painful experience of being exposed to the same poison—namely, the material and spiritual colonialism of Europe.[37] However, he had little to say about Islamic conformism; he was primarily concerned with securing the religious identity of Muslims and making them proud of belonging to the *umma*, much along the lines of Arslan's work. Incidentally, *al-Diyaʾ* contained frequent quotations of Arslan's Arabic commentaries on Lothrop Stoddard's *The New World of Islam*, and in late 1935, Arslan began corresponding with Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi. Soon after, the so-called Prince of Eloquence wrote an exclusive article for *al-Diyaʾ* about the project of translating Brill's first *Encyclopaedia of Islam* into Arabic, provided that the mistakes of Western Orientalists would be corrected and explicitly refuted by a committee of Muslim scholars.[38] The purpose of this translation was to give Muslims a sense of pride in their common heritage and achievements.

Other contributors to *al-Diyaʾ* took the same approach as Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi and Arslan, with the result that the journal, on the whole, focused not on orthodoxy or orthopraxy but on the promotion of a loose sense of Islamic identity through a process that might best be described as *national affirmation*. Al-Hilali, too, remained surprisingly quiet about theology and Islamic law in the pages of *al-Diyaʾ*. This is not to say that he renounced his religious ideals. His previous writings against *shirk*, superstitions, Sufi excesses, and the Shiʿis made it clear that he cared about the purification of Islam, and he would have agreed with his friend ʿAbd al-Zahir Abu al-Samh when the latter argued a few years earlier, in Mecca,

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that calling people to true Islam was "the gateway to independence and freedom."[39] But in the grand scheme of things, the purification and standardization of Islam was only one way among many to strengthen the worldwide Muslim community, and it did not always need to take precedence over the others. Different aspects of the reformist strategy were better suited for different contexts. In colonial India, unlike in the Saudi state, it was more urgent to advance the cause of Arabic. It was also more important to advocate balanced reform than it was to merely purify Sunni Islam.

Therefore, al-Hilali preferred to write about the need to combine religious education and modern sciences to produce capable Islamic nationalists who could stand up to Western powers. Indian Muslims must embrace this basic principle, he claimed, and they should act on it by establishing and financially supporting a greater number of schools from which doctors, lawyers, geographers, engineers, and chemists could graduate while being fully devoted to the defense of their religion and the *umma*. But apart from the obligation to teach Arabic in the most efficient way, al-Hilali never specified the nature of proper Islamic education. Instead, he showed respect for all educators who strove to combine religion and the modern sciences, regardless of their understanding of Islam. He thus placed the founders of the Jamia Milia Islamia in Delhi on par with the founders of the Nadwat al-ʿUlama in Lucknow, and he even acknowledged the efforts of the late Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the founder of the Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, whom he would later disavow.[40] For the sake of pragmatism, al-Hilali was determined not to let his Salafi convictions stand in the way of mobilizing Indian Muslims qua Muslims. He claimed that faith in one God was a matter of "national pride [*al-ʿizza al-qawmiyya*]" but fell short of stating how faith in one God had to be interpreted.[41]

Moreover, al-Hilali's articles in *al-Diyaʾ* drew no particular attention to the fact that the curriculum of Dar al-ʿUlum included materials that even a mid-twentieth-century Salafi would have found objectionable, such as a book on philosophical Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf al-falsafī*) and a commentary on the creed of al-Nasafi (d. 1142), which celebrated speculative theology.[42] What bothered al-Hilali was not that students were exposed to false beliefs but rather that the curriculum was poorly planned and was not designed to help students reach their full potential. Even more disquieting to him was the inability of many Islamic schools to preserve a good balance between the spiritual and the temporal within their programs.

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Educational institutions could not afford to neglect religion to the point of being Islamic in name only, nor could they shun the modern sciences. Balance was precisely what the Muslim community needed to regain its strength and defeat its enemies—so much so that from al-Hilali's Islamic nationalist perspective, the refusal to adopt a middle-of-the-road position was tantamount to treason. Hence, he made this recommendation to his Indian readers in 1934: "Purify the schools, hospitals and offices from [both] the overly Europeanized traitors [*al-mutafarnijīn al-khāʾinīn*] and the lethargic treacherous ʿulama [*al-ʿulamāʾ al-jāmidīn wa-l-khāʾinīn*]."[43]

Nevertheless, al-Hilali did not completely lose sight of Islamic conformism. At the same time he was writing for *al-Diyaʾ*, he was mailing articles to the weekly Algerian newspaper *al-Sirat al-Sawi*, an organ of the Association of Algerian Muslim ʿUlama. In these articles, he was far more willing to address questions of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. He defended the scripturalist approach to Islam, warned Sufis against their misconception of the notion of *awliyāʾ* (friends of God), and criticized Algerian religious scholars who placed Maliki jurisprudence above the Qurʾan and the Sunna.[44] Likewise, during a summer trip to Kabul in 1933, al-Hilali was clearly worried about the impure religious beliefs and practices of the locals. In addition to publicly confronting Afghans about their sectarian adherence to the Hanafi school of law, he privately decried their nearly universal devotion to Sufi orders and their deep aversion to the creed of the Wahhabis. We know this, in part, from the personal accounts of his observations that he sent to Rida, who, in turn, shared them with Arslan.[45] If al-Hilali eschewed similar statements in *al-Diyaʾ*, it is because he considered that Indian Muslims were not yet at a stage where they could put the purification and standardization of Islam at the top of their agenda. As a minority surrounded by Hindus and followers of other religions, they first had to reduce their reliance on Urdu and acquire a consciousness of themselves as part of a worldwide, embattled national-cum-religious group. Except for the case of the Ahmadis, who were straying too far from the truth and were too involved in missionary activities to be left alone, al-Hilali did not think that the time was right for internal debates about theological and legal minutiae in India. In this part of the *umma*, Islamic conformism was for later.

This hierarchy of concerns is apparent in a debate between al-Hilali and Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi in the pages of *al-Fath*. Because Muslims in the province of Sind did not speak Urdu, Masʿud had expressed doubts in

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1937 about their possible inclusion in a future state of Pakistan. Being a true Islamic nationalist, al-Hilali had to admonish his former student. In an open letter, he explained that freeing a single Muslim from the yoke of Islam's enemies was a worthy goal. Because Muslims must primarily define their identity in religious terms, neither linguistic nor racial differences were excuses to abandon coreligionists and exclude them from the anti-colonial struggle. Despite his insistence on the connection between the Arabic language and Islamic culture, al-Hilali now felt the need to argue that linguistic diversity should not weaken Islamic nationalist sentiments. Advanced countries such as Switzerland and Belgium, he noted, had more than one official language. Similarly, there were people in the United Kingdom who spoke Scottish and others who spoke English or Welsh, yet their country was strong and united.[46]

Al-Hilali was not being entirely candid here. He did believe that linguistic diversity was an asset for the Islamic nation—but only so long as linguistic diversity meant that those who mastered other languages were people who already had a good command of classical Arabic.[47] This is why he had decided to learn English while living in Lucknow, first with his students at the Nadwat al-ʿUlama and then with a Canadian pastor and missionary who was hoping to convert him to Christianity in the process. Al-Hilali had little patience for conservative Muslim scholars who failed to understand that multilingualism was a means for the *umma* to defend itself against colonialism and thus to better serve God in the modern era. Learning foreign languages, he argued, was a *farḍ kifāya*—a religious obligation not incumbent upon every Muslim as long as others carry it out on behalf of the community.[48]

It is telling that al-Hilali allowed himself to confront Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi publicly about the latter's lapse from Islamic nationalism, but he refrained from challenging Masʿud or any of his other Indian students on religious issues. Masʿud was apparently a brilliant student, and al-Hilali later claimed that he saw no flaw in him except for his fanatical devotion to the Hanafi school of law. In spite of their religious disagreement, they remained close to each other, not only because of their teacher-student relationship but also because of their feeling that they both had the best interests of the *umma* at heart. It was not until the late 1940s that Masʿud recanted, abandoned Hanafi law, and began relying on the Qurʾan and the Sunna alone, much to al-Hilali's satisfaction.[49] Masʿud visited Saudi

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Arabia, developed a warm relationship with prominent Wahhabi scholars, and even wrote a book in Urdu devoted to the rehabilitation of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab. Its Arabic translation includes an introduction by al-Hilali, who initially brought the manuscript to the attention of ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Baz (d. 1999) and recommended it for publication. Like his Moroccan mentor, Masʿud came to conceive of Islam as a unique, simple, and standardized message valid for the entire *umma*: "In my view, the truth lies only in following the Book and the Sunnah. We do not regard guidance and teaching as the monopoly of any special organisation of fiqh, . . . school or country. Neither is it a monopoly of Najd nor of India."[50]

Toward the end of his short life, therefore, Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi reportedly became a Salafi in creed and in law.[51] Yet in the eyes of al-Hilali, this conversion took second place to Masʿud's dedication and achievements as an Islamic nationalist. When al-Hilali visited him in Pakistan in 1951, Masʿud was head of Dar al-ʿUruba, the branch of Abu al-Aʿla al-Mawdudi's organization Jamaʿat-i Islami in the city of Rawalpindi. This branch was devoted to spreading the message of the Pakistani Islamist movement in Arabic rather than Urdu. Al-Hilali still seemed prouder of his former pupil's ability to transcend cultural particularities and assert a Muslim identity in the face of spiritual and material colonialism. He declared that Dar al-ʿUruba was the fruit of his own work as a professor in Lucknow in the early 1930s and took credit for bringing the full benefits of Arabic to the "erstwhile withered Muslims" of the Indian subcontinent.[52] To be sure, the case of Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi showed that solid knowledge of Arabic could lead believers toward Salafism, but al-Hilali knew when to settle for a lesser degree of religious conformism. Unlike most of the other disciples of Rida who participated in the campaign for the rehabilitation of the Wahhabis, al-Hilali was quite explicit about the continuing need for compromise in the colonial context. His ultimate dream was of a united Islamic nation having a single creed, that of the *salaf*, and a uniform understanding of Islamic law.[53] But if misguided Muslims became defenders of the *umma*, if they learned to attach importance to the entire Islamic nation rather than to one region or one subculture in particular, and if they agreed to cooperate in the struggle against the internal and external enemies of Islam, they should be accepted as nationalist allies.

No wonder, then, that during the colonial period al-Hilali supported and took pride in individuals who failed to live up to Salafi standards. This

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explains why in 1934, just after he moved out of India to reestablish himself in southern Iraq, he wrote a short panegyric on Murabbih Rabbuh (d. 1942), the Moroccan Sufi insurgent, son of the famous Maʾ al-ʿAynayn and brother of al-Hiba, who was about to be driven out of the anti-Atlas region by advancing French forces. Al-Hilali obviously believed that Rabbuh's jihad against colonial France warranted a great measure of respect and a tolerant attitude toward his otherwise unacceptable Sufi convictions.[54] We find the same restraint in his relationship with Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi, his most famous Indian pupil, though never his favorite one. Abu al-Hasan became head of the Nadwat al-ʿUlama after Sulayman al-Nadwi's death in 1953 and gained a lasting reputation as an Islamic nationalist and best-selling author in several languages. He and al-Hilali kept corresponding and appear to have enjoyed a good rapport for many years.[55] Nevertheless, they were at odds on the question of religious purity. Abu al-Hasan was, in many ways, a reformer of milder disposition. He was a Sufi, was far more sympathetic to the Deobandis than al-Hilali ever was, and turned out to be a full-fledged supporter of the Tabligh movement—an organization that al-Hilali severely condemned for promoting religious innovations and a misguided creed.

The differences of opinion between Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi and al-Hilali about religion exemplify the paradox of Islamic conformism—namely, that the standardization of Islam in the name of unity could occur only through the condemnation and eventual stigmatization of fellow Muslims. Abu al-Hasan had little desire to grapple with this problem. When al-Hilali introduced him to various transnational networks of Islamic nationalists in the early 1930s, it was clear from the outset that his young Indian student had more affinities with the activists who emphasized militant anticolonialism and the politics of Muslim identity than with those who emphasized Salafism and religious purity. In his travel memoirs, Abu al-Hasan describes the excitement of meeting Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib in Egypt in 1951: "Our knowledge of [the journal] *al-Fath* and its editor [al-Khatib] went back roughly twenty years and dated from the days when we were the students of the great professor Taqi al-Din al-Hilali."[56] Back then, the journal—with its reformist message, focus on global Muslim affairs, and colorful columnists such as Arslan—sparked Abu al-Hasan's imagination. He was drawn to this circle of religious intellectuals and pamphleteers.

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By contrast, Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi was much less enthusiastic about the Salafi scholars' quest for rectitude and did not respond well to the religious standardization they sometimes promoted. The exclusivist dimension of Islamic nationalism did not appeal to him. During a trip to Damascus in 1951, he was curious to visit al-Bitar, who had returned to his native Syria: "I heard the name [al-Bitar] from our teacher Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, and I came across it from time to time in scholarly religious journals. I thus knew him as a strong Salafi scholar."[57] Although al-Bitar was perhaps the most flexible of the purist Salafis who had worked with al-Hilali in the Hijaz in the late 1920s, he was primarily a theologian, and Abu al-Hasan does not seem to have found in him an intellectual soul mate. Abu al-Hasan was much more excited about his exchanges with younger Islamist thinkers and politically engaged scholars. Judging from his memoirs, his meeting with al-Bitar was a formality rather than a notable event. More troubling was his encounter with al-Fiqi in Cairo earlier that year. To his surprise, Abu al-Hasan realized that al-Hilali's Egyptian friend was capable of condescending self-righteousness and Salafi sectarianism. A lecture al-Fiqi delivered at the headquarters of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya in January 1951 did not sit well with his Indian guest:

> I did not like [al-Fiqi's] tirade about the followers of the [various] schools of Islamic law. It was an offensive, contemptuous, and mocking speech. He referred to them as blind, deaf, and dumb in this world and in the next. Such a speech does not befit a sincere reformer; it is repulsive and does not serve the interests of [our] religion. I wish that [al-Fiqi] had displayed as much heart during his lecture as he displayed reason.[58]

Unlike Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi, therefore, Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi never experienced a conversion and never became a model Salafi. During the colonial period, al-Hilali was ready to overlook this fact. When push came to shove, he usually considered that cooperation among Islamic nationalists took priority over religious purity. But in the postindependence era, al-Hilali found himself under less constraint and became more open about the erroneous ways of his former student. He criticized Abu al-Hasan for being a Sufi, a Hanafi partisan of *taqlīd*, and a supporter of the Tabligh movement, and he expressed the hope that Abu al-Hasan would repent like Masʿud.[59]

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In the last quarter of the twentieth century, similar critiques of Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi arose from other Salafis, including some who belonged, or were close, to the religious establishment of Saudi Arabia. Despite Abu al-Hasan's connections to the Saudi Ministry of Education and his affiliation with the Saudi-sponsored Muslim World League (Rābiṭat al-ʿĀlam al-Islāmī), the Medina-based hadith scholar Hammad al-Ansari (d. 1998) dismissed him as a misguided Muslim after meeting him in India. Like al-Hilali, al-Ansari accused Abu al-Hasan of being a Sufi, a Tablighi, and a fanatic Hanafi. He suggested that people were interested in Abu al-Hasan only because of his eloquence and talent as a political writer.[60] We find an even harsher critique in the doctoral dissertation of Shams al-Din al-Salafi al-Afghani (d. 1999), written at the Islamic University in Medina. Al-Afghani lashed out at al-Hilali's former student for lacking discernment. How could Abu al-Hasan praise misguided figures such as Rumi, al-Ghazali, al-Maturidi, and several other deviant Muslims alongside a true authority like Ibn Taymiyya? Such inclusiveness was a sign of stupidity. Al-Afghani argued that, although Abu al-Hasan sometimes seemed to be a Salafi, he was not one. Above all, Abu al-Hasan's appreciation of unorthodox Muslims had to be condemned. Whatever service he and his misguided heroes may have rendered to the *umma* over the years, their failure to abide by Salafi standards made them unworthy of admiration.[61]

The Slow Emergence of Purist Salafism as a Concept

Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi's meeting with al-Fiqi is a reminder that certain Islamic nationalists indeed had a more demanding conception of Islamic unity. Those who had a greater tendency toward religious purism and conformism, including most of the members and sympathizers of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya in Egypt, were often those who openly claimed to be Salafis and who further developed the concept of purist Salafism. Yet the construction of this concept was not a particularly rapid process, nor did it follow a linear path. It occurred in fits and starts throughout the mid-twentieth century—in part because it remained a tentative attempt to formalize an unusual and otherwise ambiguous nomenclature and in part because in most cases questions of religious purity remained intertwined with other reformist aims.

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This last point is well illustrated in the writings of al-Hilali. What stands out about his activism during the last decades of the colonial period is precisely the flexibility that he displayed—at times pushing for religious conformism and at others focusing on the empowerment of Muslims and allowing greater intra-Islamic tolerance for the sake of Islamic nationalism. He may appear to have been a two-sided figure, but it was common for Muslim reformers to operate on several fronts at once. In sum, there was more to al-Hilali than religious purism. He did not always highlight his Salafi identity because it did not always coincide with his immediate goals, meaning that his contribution to the development of Salafism as a concept was sporadic. When he chose to write about orthodoxy and orthopraxy, he had more opportunities to use and define the term *Salafi* and, to a lesser extent, the abstract noun *Salafism*. But this did not occur on a regular basis.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that these terms gained greater circulation in the mid-twentieth century. Whoever read al-Fiqi's journal *al-Islah* or Ibn Badis' journal *al-Shihab*, for instance, could hardly have failed to notice their collaborators' self-representation as Salafis. The fact that the terms began to appear in anti-Salafi literature should, therefore, come as no surprise. In his polemics against Rida, the traditional religious scholar Yusuf al-Dijwi listed "Salafis [*salafiyyīn*]" as one of the names by which the iconoclasts of his day referred to themselves, along with "reformers [*muṣliḥīn*]," "renewers [*mujaddidīn*]," and "proponents of *ijtihād* [*mujtahidīn*]."[62] This passage is all the more telling because it indicates how easily the meaning of Salafi could shift or expand. By suggesting that the aforementioned labels were interchangeable, al-Dijwi made it easy for his readers to think that any Muslim reformer might be called a Salafi, and vice versa.[63] This kind of confusion existed in the Arab East at the time, and self-proclaimed Salafis were themselves partly to blame. The more they took steps toward the broadening of the term *Salafi*, the more inconsistencies they generated.

When Rida, among others, began claiming that one could be a Salafi in law as well as in creed, he paid little attention to conceptual niceties. Could any proponent of *ijtihād* be considered a Salafi in law? Could someone be a Salafi in law without being a Salafi in creed, even though the term was historically a theological one? Were these parts of a single conceptual "package deal"? Neither Rida nor his associates were specific, thereby opening the door to terminological slippage and undue generalizations.

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Occasional laxity did not help matters. For example, what did Rida mean when in 1932 he described his own work of Qurʾanic interpretation (*Tafsīr al-Manār*) as a "modern Salafi exegesis [*al-tafsīr al-salafī al-ʿaṣrī*]"?[64] Did he mean that his exegesis promoted proper *tawḥīd*, dealt with divine attributes in a correct way, made ample use of hadith literature, condemned innovations (*bidʿ*) and superstitions (*khurāfāt*), or all of the above? We can only speculate as to what he intended to say in this statement, but there is a hint here that *Salafi* was becoming an imprecise label for designating all sorts of reformist ideals while claiming the authority of the pious ancestors. Because Rida directly or indirectly added each of these layers of meaning to the term at one time or another, all of the aforementioned interpretations are plausible.

The catchiness of the word *Salafi* and its potentially wide range of application were at once an advantage and a disadvantage. Just as Orientalists jumped on the Salafi bandwagon and interpreted the term according to their own scholarly needs and wishes, so did a number of Muslim and Arab writers in the mid-twentieth century. Given that *Salafi* and *Salafism* were by no means self-explanatory, it is easy to understand why their meanings continued to evolve in a rather haphazard fashion. Here, however, a distinction is necessary between the contributions of religious reformers and those of other intellectuals. The Muslim reformers who participated in the making of Salafism often worked within the loose parameters set by Rida and his associates from the 1920s onward. For example, ʿAli al-Tantawi (d. 1999), the Syrian-born nephew of al-Khatib and onetime disciple of al-Bitar, established a binary opposition between *Salafi* and *Sufi*. He made it a point to treat the two words as antonyms, though he was aware that *Salafi* also had a more specific theological and legal sense.[65]

But outside the circle of Muslim reformers were intellectuals who took much greater liberties. In 1945, Salama Musa (d. 1958), the Coptic *homme de lettres* who espoused a secular vision of Egyptian nationalism, used *Salafi* as a pejorative term to mean conservative or antiprogressive. He claimed that 90 to 99 percent of all Egyptian writers were Salafis, meaning that their style, ideas, and defense of classical Arabic were antiquated. He accused fellow Egyptian author ʿAbbas Mahmud al-ʿAqqad (d. 1964) of being an exemplar of "this Salafism [*hādhihi al-salafiyya*]," which, Musa claimed, was a consequence of Egypt's exclusion from the process of industrial modernization.[66] Al-ʿAqqad defended himself against these attacks, but he did not

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question the language of the debate. He, too, used these categories in the same way in a 1945 article titled "al-Salafiyya wa-l-mustaqbaliyya [Salafism and Futurism]."[67]

The imprecise nature of Salafi labels thus presented a problem, even for the Muslim reformers of purist inclination who used them most often and who usually cared to contain them in a stable conceptual framework. In al-Fiqi's journal *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*, the organ of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya that began publication in 1937, we detect a note of hesitation. The men who wrote in this journal used the terms *Salafi* and *Salafism* from time to time and with some degree of consistency to refer to neo-Hanbali theology, to a non-*madhhab* approach to Islamic law, or to an amalgam of the two.[68] (There were also implicit suggestions that Salafis were, by definition, opponents of Sufism and religious innovations in general.) At the end of 1938, in the middle of the second year of the journal's publication, the front cover suddenly changed to display a new and unusual motto: *al-Hadi al-Nabawi* now described itself as an "Islamic, Salafi, scholarly, literary magazine [*majalla islāmiyya, salafiyya, ʿilmiyya, adabiyya*]."[69] Al-Fiqi's journal was the first in Egypt, and probably elsewhere, to make a conceptual declaration of this nature on its title page. Not even ʿAbd al-Fattah Qatlan's *al-Majalla al-Salafiyya*, thus named because of its association with the Salafiyya Bookstore in Cairo, had ever made such a mention. In 1917–1918, it rather described itself as a "scholarly, literary, ethical, historical, [and] social" journal.[70] In any case, the new motto of *al-Hadi al-Nabawi* disappeared as quickly as it had appeared, only to resurface a few months later in 1939 in an even simpler form. This time *al-Hadi al-Nabawi* presented itself as an "Islamic, Salafi, monthly magazine."[71] But, once again, the editing team removed the term *Salafi* from the front cover before the next issue came out.

It is not clear why al-Fiqi and his partners chose to drop this self-designating marker. Whatever the reason, their hesitation is representative of what was then the state of the conceptual field. Despite their increasing visibility, Salafi labels were not yet a staple of Islamic discourse in the mid-twentieth century. Their success was neither immediate nor definitive, and at times, their meaning remained more suggestive than transparent. As a result, the line between Salafis and non-Salafis could still be quite blurred. In *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*, one interesting case is that of Mahmud Abu Rayya (d. 1970), the Azhari scholar who eventually became a pariah and

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victim of incessant abuse from purist Salafis for his view that the bulk of hadith literature was unreliable. As strange as it may now seem to us, Abu Rayya was an associate of al-Fiqi at the time, and *al-Hadi al-Nabawi* went so far as to refer to him as a Salafi in 1939.[72] This is all the more surprising given that Abu Rayya had obviously not internalized the conception of Salafism that prevailed within Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya. In an article written earlier that year for *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*, he praised two of his favorite role models, al-Afghani and ʿAbduh, and made the bizarre claim that "no one knew what the doctrine of the forefathers [*madhhab al-salaf*] was before these two wise men began their mission."[73]

From both a technical and a historical standpoint, this claim made little sense, and it is difficult to imagine al-Fiqi agreeing with it.[74] Obviously, Abu Rayya had either a naïve or an idiosyncratic understanding of *madhhab al-salaf*. From a different source dating from the same period, we gather that he primarily defined a Salafi as a Muslim who abhorred *taqlīd* and called for *ijtihād*.[75] Not only did he seem oblivious to the theological and epistemological features of Salafism as outlined by purist scholars, but also he leaned toward an "enlightened" conception of *ijtihād* that was far more rationalistic than that of the purist Salafis. Like ʿAbduh, Abu Rayya saw *ijtihād* as an intellectual exertion to shake off the shackles of blind acceptance and judge the validity of religious traditions by the yardstick of reason. As early as 1937, there were clear signs that his brand of religious reform privileged the Qurʾan and implied a reconsideration of the relevance of the Sunna. He stated, for example, that Islam had nothing to do with the personal life of the Prophet.[76] Then in 1945, he expressed the desire to write a critical book about the history and authenticity of hadiths, which ultimately came out in 1958 under the title *Aḍwāʾ ʿalā al-sunna al-muḥammadiyya* (Lights on the Muhammadan Sunna). It caused a storm of controversy.[77] To be sure, the Abu Rayya of 1939 was not the Abu Rayya of 1958. Yet by the late 1930s, he was already and unmistakably a man of modernist tendencies who favored reason and freedom of thought over transmitted knowledge.

That a leading purist such as al-Fiqi counted Abu Rayya among the Salafis betrays a measure of conceptual leniency that was becoming rarer. To appreciate the context of this gesture, one must keep in mind that Islamic nationalism fostered a spirit of collaboration, even within the circle of those who produced *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*. Although the journal focused on the purity of Islam and its place in society, it also had a great deal of

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political resonance and supported a nationalist conception of Islamic identity in no uncertain terms.[78] As editor, al-Fiqi insisted on the benefits of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in this life and the next. For him, the process of religious purification and standardization was a major step toward the advent of a strong Islamic front (*jabha islāmiyya qawiyya*), uniting all Muslims in the face of European encroachment. The *umma* is one and must, therefore, speak with one voice, he wrote in 1939.[79] Should all believers agree to conform to the norms of Salafism, the Islamic nation would necessarily enjoy worldly success—not only because pure Islam was inherently superior but also because true national unity meant power. Without such unity and power, Muslims remained "a tasty bite that any colonial power can swallow at will." Therefore, al-Fiqi urged the few rightly guided reformers around the globe to combine their efforts against misguided Muslims—mostly ignoramuses and Westernized renegades—to revive pure Islam and thus cure the diseases that crippled the body of Islamic society.[80]

The tricky problem, as always, was to determine who the rightly guided reformers were. If 99 percent of the *umma* was in a state of ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) about theology, law, morals, and every other aspect of Islam, as Abu al-Samh claimed in one of the many articles he sent to *al-Hadi al-Nabawi* from Mecca, then the purist Salafis of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya could hardly afford to be overcritical of their potential allies.[81] Indeed, for all his insistence on orthodoxy and orthopraxy, al-Fiqi, too, sometimes turned a blind eye to the religious mistakes and imperfections of his partners, though he had a comparatively lower threshold of tolerance than, say, Rida or al-Hilali. It is thus possible that al-Fiqi paid Abu Rayya the honor of calling him a Salafi because the latter had *some* of the attributes of one. Abu Rayya may not have been a full-fledged adherent to neo-Hanbali theology; he may have had doubts about the veracity of the Sunna and may have given too much weight to independent reason. But at least he fought against superstitions and promoted a certain type of *ijtihād*, which, though not ideal, was likely to bring more benefit than harm to the cause of Ansar al-Sunna. It seems that he had just enough in common with purist activists to be placed in the Salafi camp, at least for the time being.

By and large, al-Fiqi and his closest associates were not in the habit of being lenient and casually bestowing the label *Salafi* on individuals such as Abu Rayya. They reserved it for people whose theological and legal views they regarded as truly orthodox. The case of Abu Rayya is unusual, but

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it indicates that pragmatic factors continued to affect how purist activists dealt with less purist members of their community. This gave them some room to maneuver conceptually. In *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*, there are other instances where the label *Salafi* functioned as little more than a code word for *ally*, even when the ally in question left much to be desired. Consider the 1938 statement by Mustafa al-Maraghi (d. 1945), then rector of al-Azhar and a strong supporter of al-Fiqi, who declared that with respect to theology King Faruq of Egypt was "Salafi in doctrine and methodology [*huwa min nāḥiyat al-ʿaqīda salafī al-madhhab wa-l-manhaj*]."[82] This was a case of obsequious flattery, which must be understood as part of a broader effort by al-Azhar and the Egyptian Palace to enhance the young king's Islamic credentials and portray him as a potential caliph.[83] Although this politically motivated statement was bound to trivialize the term *Salafi* (it did not take long before Faruq gained the reputation of being an immoral hedonist rather than a paragon of theological purity), al-Fiqi did not dispute whether the king truly deserved the epithet or not. There was nothing to be gained by nitpicking about details when al-Maraghi's goal was "to reorient Egyptian society in a more Islamic direction" and advance the cause of Islamic nationalism.[84]

In sum, the purist activists who produced *al-Hadi al-Nabawi* were serious but not overzealous in their efforts to fix the meaning of Salafi labels. That said, they were far more aggressive when religious competitors sought to appropriate these labels and gain control over their interpretation. So although they occasionally used *Salafi* in a loose way when it served their purposes, al-Fiqi and his associates did not want others to do the same. They had no tolerance for rival Muslim activists who they thought subverted the core meaning of the label and turned it against the "real" purists. Chief among the culprits was the Azhari scholar Mahmud Khattab al-Subki (d. 1933), the founder of the Shariʿa Association (al-Jamʿiyya al-Sharīʿa) in Egypt in 1912. At first glance, the goals of this association seemed similar to those of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya. Both claimed to combat religious innovations and superstitions, to eschew direct political involvement, and to seek to inculcate the creed of the *salaf* in their members.[85] But al-Subki understood the creed of the *salaf* quite differently from the neo-Hanbalis. He refused to affirm the divine attributes in their literal sense and argued that their meaning—and not just their modality—had to be relegated to God (*tafwīḍ al-maʿnā*). Thus, in the eyes of al-Subki, anyone

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who interpreted Qur'an 20:5 to mean that God *actually* "established Himself over the throne [*ʿalā al-ʿarsh istawā*]," even with the caveat that God's actions are incomparable to those of His creatures, was an anthropomorphist and an unbeliever (*kāfir*). The individuals who held such beliefs, he claimed, were beyond the pale of Islam. None of their religious works was valid, their spouses had the right to separate from them, and if they died without repenting, their bodies could not be washed, prayed over, or buried in a Muslim cemetery.[86]

Here, al-Subki did more than simply adopt a harsh or intolerant attitude; he mounted a twofold attack on neo-Hanbali orthodoxy. First, his position that one must leave the interpretation of ambiguous divine attributes to God was in direct contradiction to the views of Ibn Taymiyya, for whom turning away from the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of these attributes amounted to their negation. Besides, Ibn Taymiyya considered the principle of noninterpretation to be an affront to the pious ancestors, for it "[made] the prophets and the Salaf out not to have known what they were talking about when they mentioned these attributes," as Jon Hoover put it.[87] Second, and perhaps more importantly for the present discussion, al-Subki attempted to wrest the label *Salafi* from the neo-Hanbalis. In reality, al-Subki was an Ashʿari scholar: what he called *madhhab al-salaf* and Salafi theology was the traditional Ashʿari position of neither affirming nor denying the apparent meaning of ambiguous divine attributes. It was one thing to criticize the creed of Ibn Taymiyya and his mid-twentieth-century followers, but quite another to oppose "their pretension to be Salafis [*daʿwāhum annahum salafiyyūn*]" while implicitly claiming the label for Ashʿaris.[88]

Al-Subki made these declarations in a book titled *Itḥāf al-kāʾināt bi-bayān madhhab al-salaf wa-l-khalaf fī-l-mutashābihāt* (The gift to the world of the explanation of the doctrines of the ancestors and the successors regarding the equivocal verses), which came out in 1932, a year before he passed away. Considering the confrontational tone of this work and considering its direct challenge to the purist conception of Salafi theology, some wondered why Rida wrote and published a short eulogy of al-Subki in *al-Manar*. A perplexed reader from Jeddah wrote to Rida to express his surprise: "I do not know if you composed that [eulogy] before reading [al-Subki's] book *Itḥāf al-kāʾināt*, which he . . . packed with charges of unbelief against those who believe that God is firmly established over the throne in

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a manner that behooves His majesty."[89] Indeed, Rida acknowledged that he had not read the book, though he said he was aware that all the Salafis who had read it resented it. Nevertheless, he defended himself by saying that he kept his eulogy short and that al-Subki deserved some respect despite his faults because, after all, he had done some good things in his life. He loved the Sunna, wrote a commentary on the *Sunan* of Abu Dawud (one of the six canonical collections of hadith), and fought against innovations. Rida admitted that he did not know al-Subki very well but supposed that the latter had never had the chance to read proper (that is, neo-Hanbali) books of theology, which were less easily available in Egypt.

Whereas Rida remained on the fence about al-Subki, in part because he lacked information about the man and his work, members and sympathizers of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya were relentless in their determination to excoriate him and his Shariʿa Association. In 1939, the controversial Najdi scholar ʿAbdallah al-Qasimi (d. 1996)—a dedicated champion of Salafi theology until he gradually turned to atheism beginning in the mid-1940s—lambasted the late al-Subki in an article published in *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*. The article was a scathing critique of the Egyptian scholar ʿAbd al-Rahman Khalifa (d. 1945), another Ashʿari who accused neo-Hanbalis in general, and Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya in particular, of being apostles of anthropomorphism and of having the nerve to promote their false creed under the labels of *Salafi theology* and *Salafism*. Al-Qasimi responded to these attacks and took the opportunity to point out that his opponent relied heavily on al-Subki's book *Itḥāf al-kāʾināt*. The fact that Khalifa held the late al-Subki in high esteem and looked to him as a source of guidance about theology was a clear sign of ignorance, al-Qasimi argued. It meant that Khalifa could not distinguish right from wrong and could not be considered an authoritative scholar.[90]

To buttress his case, al-Qasimi redirected his readers to a book he had originally published in 1937 with the Salafiyya Press in Cairo, in which he provided a litany of accusations against al-Subki, ranging from his blasphemous approach to leadership as head of the Shariʿa Association to his arbitrary rulings in matters of Islamic law.[91] Al-Qasimi was not alone in attempting to undermine the religious legitimacy of al-Subki on questions of both theology and ritual. We find similar accusations in the work of Muhammad ʿAbd al-Salam al-Shuqayri (d. 1952), another purist Salafi close to al-Fiqi who was both a member of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya

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and the founder of the Salafiyya Association (al-Jamʿiyya al-Salafiyya) in Giza, near Cairo. In 1934, al-Shuqayri published a book that purported to expose over 960 religious innovations that contradicted the Sunna. Several passages targeted the late al-Subki's reliance on forged hadiths and his tendency to prohibit that which is permissible.[92]

Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya's critiques of al-Subki and his followers (often labeled *Subkis* or *Khattabis* in a derogatory sense) did not diminish over time. They only became longer and more strident. In 1948, *al-Hadi al-Nabawi* published a nearly fifty-page study dedicated to the stigmatization of the Shariʿa Association and its founder.[93] Behind these repetitive attacks was, of course, a substantial disagreement about the nature of true Islam. But if a modus vivendi could be worked out with someone like Abu Rayya (who was skeptical of the Sunna) and not with the so-called Subkis (some of whom were "partially Salafis," according to Rida[94]), it is because there were also political motives behind Ansar al-Sunna's attempt to discredit the group. Had al-Subki not condemned the neo-Hanbalis so openly and had he not provided ammunition to the leading anti-Salafi scholars of the mid-twentieth century, he and his association might well have been considered allies of convenience given their efforts to promote the scriptural sources of Islam, however imperfectly.

The point is that even the Salafis who placed greater emphasis on orthodoxy and orthopraxy did not systematically act according to a logic of religious purity. They were more intransigent than other Salafis who, like al-Hilali, were willing to deemphasize Islamic purification and standardization for tactical reasons. Yet the leadership of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya could embrace activists who failed to live up to the ideal type of the purist Salafi as long as they did not attack "real" Salafis or did not pose a threat to the status of al-Fiqi's association. As Islamic nationalists, the most influential members of Ansar al-Sunna could not avoid the tension between the need for an *umma* that would unite against colonialism and the wish for an *umma* that was religiously homogenous. Al-Fiqi himself struggled with this dilemma: How could "right" Islamic reformers unite to silence "wrong" Islamic reformers without causing so much disorder as to endanger cooperation and, therefore, keep the *umma* in a state of weakness?[95] Posed in this way, the problem was insoluble because too many reformers were neither entirely right nor entirely wrong according to Ansar al-Sunna's own point of view. Sometimes the most sensible thing

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to do was simply to bear with others' religious errors. But such decisions were made on a case-by-case basis and were motivated by religious as well as nonreligious considerations—hence the occasional inconsistencies in how members of Ansar al-Sunna defined the label *Salafi* and how they actually used it to refer to certain individuals.

***

From the perspective of conceptual history, then, we must be careful not to exaggerate the maturity and analytical precision of *Salafism* in the mid-twentieth century. It is true that a purist concept of Salafism emerged at that time, and it is also true that this concept was in some ways similar to the one that prevails today. However, it was relatively new and still somewhat marginal, which made it even more liable to misuse and more vulnerable to conceptual drifts. In addition, the purist Salafis who took part in struggles over the meaning of Salafism made no exhaustive attempt to delimit its boundaries, nor did they strive to establish a coherent set of criteria to determine who should be included in the Salafi camp. This, combined with the politics of Islamic nationalism, provided some room for conceptual discretion. There were arguably more grey areas in what was expected of a Salafi in the mid-twentieth century than in the late twentieth century.

We must also acknowledge that conceptual distinctions between various approaches to Islamic reform were still taking shape and that, as a result, they were not as systematic or sophisticated as they are now. The Muslim reformers of the mid-twentieth century, for example, did not draw stark lines between "Salafis" and "Islamists" or between "Salafis" and "Rationalists [*ʿaqlāniyyīn*]," as is often the case today. The classificatory schemes were not yet elaborate enough to allow such divisions, and a majority of Islamic nationalists would have hesitated before fitting fellow Sunni reformers into rigid religious pigeonholes. On the contrary, the intellectual scene was quite fluid. In the late 1930s alone, members of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya were writing in the journal of the Muslim Brotherhood, members of the Muslim Brotherhood were writing in *al-Fath*, and members of the *al-Fath* team, including its editor, were writing in the journal of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya. For most of the colonial period, these individuals perceived themselves as partners, even

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when they did not see eye to eye on religious matters. There was nothing unconventional about their cooperation from an Islamic nationalist point of view. Al-Hilali was another activist who wrote articles for both the Muslim Brotherhood and Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya between the late 1930s and the mid-1940s, in addition to the many articles he published in *al-Fath*.

This is not to minimize the distinctive features of these various journals or the activists who produced them. *Al-Fath*, for example, was a politically oriented and superficially religious periodical dedicated to the defense of Muslim identity and the pan-Islamic struggle against colonialism, whereas *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*, with its serialized exegesis of the Qurʾan and its fatwa section, focused on religious issues and was primarily devoted to the purification of Islamic beliefs and practices. No doubt the two publications were different, but that difference, however considerable, entailed no compartmentalization. After all, each journal concentrated on one aspect of what used to be *al-Manar*'s multifaceted agenda. For nearly four decades, Rida produced an eclectic periodical that boasted contributors of various religious orientations and areas of specialization. He himself wore many hats over the years: in *al-Manar*, he was, in turn, an exegete, a social critic, a mufti, a political philosopher, a book reviewer, a champion of modern civilization, a propagandist for the Wahhabis, and more. His death in 1935 certainly contributed to the greater division of labor among the Muslim reformers (and one could argue that *al-Hadi al-Nabawi* inherited the Salafi dimension of *al-Manar*'s agenda), but this division was not so drastic as to generate competitive antagonism, at least for some time.

Nevertheless, the fluidity of the intellectual scene in the age of Islamic nationalism and the existence of substantial grey areas between Salafis and non-Salafis do not justify the lumping together of a multitude of interrelated reformist figures and institutions under the name of *Salafism* for the sake of convenience. It is unnecessary and misleading, for instance, to speak of *al-Fath* as a Salafi journal. For one thing, most of what *al-Fath* published had nothing to do with Salafi Islam, and its editor had no desire to use, promote, or develop the concept of Salafism. One may suspect that al-Khatib considered himself a Salafi in creed and law,[96] but he remained discreet about his own religious identity in *al-Fath*. Furthermore, his editorial line sent mixed signals. Despite his wish for the triumph of the one true Islam, he often adopted an inclusivist Islamic nationalist position that

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downplayed religious conformism and thus undermined the primacy of Salafi theology. He not only tolerated differences of belief but also continued to call for a rapprochement (*taqrīb*) between the major theological groups—namely, the Sunnis, Twelver Shiʿis, Zaydis, and Ibadis—on the basis that they were all legitimate.[97] This was not at all a typical Salafi position in the mid-twentieth century. Generally speaking, purist Salafis of that period could tolerate differences of belief up to a point, but they did not advocate the view that Salafi theology and other Islamic creeds were of equal worth. Their notion of tolerance was rather a negative one, in that it meant "the recognition or permission of something which is forbidden."[98]

Similar caution should be exercised when dealing with other mid-twentieth-century reformist publications, such as *al-Diyaʾ*, which was closer in form and spirit to *al-Fath* than to *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*. There was nothing specifically Salafi about this Indian journal. Al-Hilali was probably the only self-proclaimed Salafi on the staff, and that we know from other sources. He did not reveal his theological and legal preferences in the pages of *al-Diyaʾ*, nor did he say anything about his religious epistemology. At least one Indian contributor commented favorably on Muslim scholars who maintained no attachment to a particular legal *madhhab*,[99] but this alone would not be sufficient to claim that the journal was the voice of Salafism in colonial India.

If we are to avoid the trap of misrepresenting the discourse of Islamic reformers in the mid-twentieth century, we must pay attention to these nuances. It is easy to adopt a more recent, more mature, and more precise definition of purist Salafism and to apply it retroactively to individuals and institutions as we see fit. It is also too easy to use *Salafism* ad lib on the pretext that the Arab and Muslim activists of the mid-twentieth century gave it various and vague meanings. But conceptual imprecision is not the same as polysemy. In all of *al-Diyaʾ*, for example, there is only one tentative reference to "the Salafi movement [*al-ḥaraka al-salafiyya*]," which Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi defined in particularly indefinite terms as "the movement of decisive revolution against stagnancy [*hiya al-ḥaraka al-inqilābiyya al-qāḍiyya ʿalā al-jumūd*]."[100] Here, we can either take his declaration at face value and conclude that being a Salafi meant being a reformer—*any kind* of reformer—or we can weigh the evidence and conclude that he probably did not have a deep understanding of the word *Salafi* in the early 1930s and passed over the specifics of a conceptual apparatus with which he was unfamiliar.

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The latter interpretation is more credible. Indeed, after his reported conversion to purist Salafism in the late 1940s, Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi started using Salafi labels more frequently and with slightly more precision. He associated "true Salafism [*al-salafiyya al-ṣaḥīḥa*]" with the intellectual heritage of Ibn Taymiyya and with the condemnation of innovations and superstitions.[101] Yet one still wonders to what extent he understood the theological and epistemological roots of the concept. His claim that one of the greatest representatives of Salafism in recent Indian history was Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938)—a modernist and philosophically inclined intellectual who had no interest in reviving neo-Hanbali orthodoxy and who made ample use of metaphorical interpretations in his efforts to build a new theology for the modern era—smacks of conceptual sloppiness.[102]

The fact that Western scholars have made similar statements and have categorized Iqbal as a so-called modernist Salafi alongside al-Afghani and ʿAbduh does not make Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi's claim more valid. On the contrary, it raises the question of why the marginal and empirically flawed notion of modernist Salafism, which first appeared in Europe, gained ground in some parts of the Muslim world during the mid-twentieth century. Whatever its merits or demerits, this competing version of Salafism formally established itself in the religious discourse of certain Muslim reformers between the 1930s and the 1950s, mainly in al-Hilali's native Morocco. As an indigenous (or "indigenized") religious category, it has continued to affect, if not distort, the way historians make sense of the evolution of modern Islamic thought. Under what circumstances did the notion of modernist Salafism develop in North Africa? How exactly did "modernist" Salafis differ from "purist" Salafis in the mid-twentieth century? Were the latter necessarily less rational or more antimodern? The intellectual journey of al-Hilali sheds some light on these questions. Following his stay in colonial India and a brief return to southern Iraq, al-Hilali chose to go to Germany in 1936 to pursue doctoral studies. He later spent five years in Morocco, from 1942 to 1947, and then made Baghdad his home base until the late 1950s. His experiences during that time period provide a useful starting point for discussion.

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4

The Ironies of Modernity and the Advent of Modernist Salafism

If one thinks of modernity as a "form of historical consciousness that gives its logic to any number of competing projects," then Islamic nationalism was undoubtedly a modern phenomenon.[1] It was fueled by an awareness of widespread colonialism and a desire to defend Islam and the *umma* more efficiently by presenting them, respectively, as a cultural identity and as a nation. In that sense, the purist Salafis who espoused Islamic nationalism in the mid-twentieth century did, to some extent, adhere to a nontraditional way of thinking about religious belonging. Their more or less pronounced tendency to view the purity and uniformity of Islam as constitutive elements of Muslim unity distinguished them from other Islamic nationalists, but it did not prevent them from believing in the idea of progress (*taqaddum*). They simply had a more rigorist conception of the Islamic orthodoxy and orthopraxy necessary to reverse the decline of the *umma*.[2] In their opinion, purist Salafism could not possibly impede the advancement of the Muslim people. Anyone who thought otherwise misunderstood either civilizational advancement or Salafism, hence the need to explain seemingly retrograde aspects of this religious orientation in progressive terms. At the very least, the call to pure Islam needed to reflect the reality of the twentieth century. This is why Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar suggested that the medieval writings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya be recast in a more didactic and modern style

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to better convey the Salafi conception of *tawḥīd* to educated lay Muslims and thus better defend Salafism against its contemporary detractors.[3]

To use the formula of historian John Voll, we could say that the purist Salafis who served the cause of Islamic nationalism were "modern (though, not always 'modernist') in their intellectual formulations."[4] However, it is difficult to make a similar concession in the case of purist Salafis who did not adopt an Islamic nationalist stance, let alone a balanced reformist stance. Despite the taming of Wahhabi zeal, most religious scholars of Najd still showed little interest in promoting civilizational progress, nationalism, and the use of new but beneficial intellectual practices and idioms. More often than not, they allowed religious purity—or the fear of compromising religious purity—to trump other considerations. Only under a particularly generous definition of the modern, then, could one argue that these scholars were agents of an Islamic modernity.

The difference between purist Salafis who articulated an Islamic nationalist agenda and those who did not was at times striking. In 1955, two Wahhabi scholars from Najd, Salih al-Khuraysi (d. 1995) and Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al al-Shaykh (then mufti of Saudi Arabia), petitioned King Saᶜud ibn ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz and a member of the Royal Diwan, respectively, to prevent foreign professors from being hired to teach in Saudi schools. Foreigners, by which they meant non-Salafi and non-Saudi Muslims, brought too many evils (*mafāsid*).[5] Two years later, by contrast, Taqi al-Din al-Hilali called for the establishment of a novel type of university in Morocco where foreign professors—especially Europeans—could come to teach natural and empirical sciences to local students. Moroccans would thus be able to take advantage of the technical knowledge of Westerners without having to study abroad and put their faith at risk.[6] Like the two Wahhabi scholars, al-Hilali feared cultural contamination—but never to the point of dismissing the necessity for the *umma* to become a powerful, modern nation worthy of international respect.

As this example suggests, it would be rash to conclude that the combination of Islamic nationalism and purist Salafism necessarily fanned the flames of anti-Western sentiments or was itself a byproduct of those sentiments. Attitudes toward the West were more complex than that. Al-Hilali, for one, did not become increasingly opposed to all things Western during the mid-twentieth century. Quite the contrary: it was during this period that Europe's intellectual magnetism attracted him the most. In 1940, he

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graduated from the University of Berlin with a PhD in Arabic literature, only one year prior to the late Harvard professor Annemarie Schimmel.[7] Incidentally, they both worked under the same supervisor. Al-Hilali's experience in Germany is a reminder that the dialectical process of the anticolonial struggle (what Clement Moore Henry calls "the colonial dialectic"[8]) affected many purist Salafis, too. For the Islamic nationalists among them, Western intellectual, social, and political achievements were as much a source of inspiration as an object of contempt. This chapter offers many examples of this ambivalent attitude.

During al-Hilali's stay in Germany, however, a distinctly and unapologetically modernist conceptualization of Salafism found expression in the Arabic works of other Muslim activists. Nowhere did it become more elaborate, popular, and entrenched than in the intellectual circles of Morocco. There the notion of Salafism eventually took on liberal and Enlightenment overtones. The term came to refer to a movement of Islamic reform launched, or at least refined, by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad ʿAbduh (a claim that, as we have seen, has no support in fact). This competing version of Salafism was peculiar in that it did not build on the medieval understanding of the doctrine of the forefathers (*madhhab al-salaf*) and had nothing to do with either theological fideism or the neo-Hanbali interpretation of divine attributes. Rather, it proved similar in most respects to the conceptualization of the Salafi movement Western Orientalists had constructed and developed since the 1920s. As we shall see, this was not entirely coincidental.

There were, of course, commonalities between the purist and the modernist conceptions of Salafism found in the Arabic sources of the mid-twentieth century. Both implied a rejection of blind imitation and superstitions (though not always for the same reasons), a moderate or severe critique of Sufism, and a return to the Qurʾan and the Sunna. But even when taken together, these broad principles were not the prerogative of reformers who called themselves *Salafis*, nor were they specific to them. It follows that the mere existence of commonalities cannot, in and of itself, explain the emergence of a rival conceptualization of Salafism in Morocco from the mid-1930s onward. No doubt there were other reasons why local activists started using the same term to stand for a substantially different brand of Islamic reform. The influence of Western Orientalists was one of them. Indeed, there is evidence that the flawed assumptions

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of Louis Massignon about the meaning and origins of *salafiyya* found their way into French North Africa and influenced ʿAllal al-Fasi, the foremost articulator of modernist Salafism in Morocco. Here, indigenous and exogenous sources ended up validating each other's claims in a circular way. Because the Moroccan activists' definition of Salafism appeared to confirm the Orientalists' own assumptions, it further misled Western and Western-trained scholars into thinking that their historical-conceptual premises were correct. Yet what these scholars thought were corroborative proofs were in fact echoes of their own voices.

Another distinctive trait of the Moroccan reformers, which is relevant for our purposes, is that they promoted a narrower sense of belonging. Just as there was a significant difference between the purist Salafis who espoused the cause of Islamic nationalism and those who did not, so, too, was there a significant difference between the purist Salafis who espoused Islamic nationalism and the Moroccan exponents of modernist Salafism. Al-Fasi and his associates did not approach the anticolonial struggle from an Islamic nationalist perspective. The idea that "Islamic principles, wherever they can be found, are the homeland [*waṭan*] of the Muslim" did not resonate with them.[9] Above all, they were territorial-statist nationalists: they thought of their nation as a specifically Moroccan and, to some extent, religiously pluralist entity. In the early 1950s, al-Fasi wrote that "true nationalism [*al-waṭaniyya al-ṣaḥīḥa*] does not value people on the basis of their racial, linguistic or religious differences; it rather values them according to the agreement between their psyche [*namūdhajihim al-shakhṣī*] and the homeland in which they live."[10] In sum, Morocco was a nation-state, and all those who either lived in the country or shared Morocco's historically constituted national character were automatically part of the Moroccan people, even if they were non-Muslims. Al-Fasi included the country's Jewish minority in the most explicit manner.[11] These views dated from at least 1934, when he and other activists submitted the *Plan de réformes marocaines* to the French authorities. In this first formal formulation of nationalist demands, they advocated the principle of *jus soli* combined with a degree of *jus sanguinis* and already spoke of "Israelite and Muslim Moroccans" as having the same nationality.[12]

This conception of the Moroccan nation, as well as the values that informed the political thinking of al-Fasi and his associates, reflects the

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modernist nature of their reformist agenda. Overall their greater openness to Western norms made them far less suspicious of cultural contamination than were Salafis of purist inclination. Epistemologically speaking, one could say that the leading Muslim reformers of Morocco belonged to "the school of ʿAbduh," as Albert Hourani calls it.[13] They had no qualms about exalting reason over revelation when necessary, and they proceeded from the belief that Islam was compatible with virtually all aspects of Western modernity, not just its technological dimension. Al-Fasi's writings, for example, are replete with references to rationalism, humanism, democracy, freedom of religion, the rejection of polygamy, and women's right to vote and run for office. Although he failed to defend some of these ideals as a statesman after independence, during the colonial period he held fast to them. Thus, he saw no ethical dilemma in collaborating with secular, French-educated nationalists and saw no need to restrain their admiration for Western models. Perhaps the most glaring example is his partnership with Ahmad Balafrij (d. 1990), an outspoken champion of the Euro-American notion of human rights and the liberalism of John Locke.[14]

Although the modernist outlook of al-Fasi and his associates did not necessarily determine their understanding of nationalism, it nonetheless facilitated their adoption of a territorial-statist rather than an Islamic conception of the nation. In general, purist Salafis had more difficulty accepting the principle that a modern nation-state, not Islam, should be the locus of a Muslim's identity and allegiance. During the colonial period, the gap between these two types of nationalism could still be minimized. After independence, however, it would have lasting implications for the development of Salafism as a concept.

In Europe as Shakib Arslan's Alter Ego

Ever since his renunciation of Sufism in Morocco in 1921, al-Hilali had dreamed of becoming a religious erudite and scholar. In Medina, he had a chance to teach at one of the two most prestigious and cosmopolitan mosques of the Muslim world. In colonial India, he studied under renowned hadith specialists, and in the 1930s, he taught in one of the most famous Muslim seminaries in the subcontinent. Yet these experiences did

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not satisfy al-Hilali's ambitions, nor did they give him the prestige he was hoping for:

> Already at that time, I was of the opinion that a scholar without a diploma [from a European university] was like a traveler without a passport: there is no room for him in schools of higher standing. If he publishes a book or writes an article, the first question that people ask is: "Does he have an internationally recognized diploma?" The answer is no. "Does he know a foreign language?" The answer is no. "Did he study in Europe?" The answer is no.[15]

To increase his credibility as a global defender of Islam and the *umma*, al-Hilali believed he needed to undertake graduate studies in a European country. Expertise in traditional religious science alone, he claimed, was not enough. Only with a scholarly passport from the West could he truly be able to command authority in the Islamic world.[16] As a result, he left Iraq once again in 1936 and traveled to Europe in hopes of finding an opportunity to study in one of its great universities.[17] At the time, Arab activists who traveled to Europe were well aware that they could find a host and a guide in the person of the emir Shakib Arslan, the former Ottoman official and famous Arab polemicist who had gone into exile in Switzerland at the end of the First World War.[18] Born in 1869, Arslan had met al-Afghani, studied under ʿAbduh, befriended Rashid Rida and al-Bitar, collaborated with Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, and maintained contact with Muslim activists from virtually every country in North Africa and the Arab East.[19]

It should, therefore, come as no surprise that al-Hilali chose Geneva as his first European destination, even though he did not yet know Arslan personally. The two men had several friends in common, and Arslan was known for supporting the kind of educational endeavors upon which al-Hilali was about to embark. In the pages of *al-Fath* in 1930, Arslan had already encouraged Muslims to learn European languages and to study in Europe, so long as they could preserve their own religion.[20] As expected, al-Hilali found the help he needed in Switzerland. He stayed in Arslan's house for one month in 1936 while figuring out where and how to undertake graduate studies. From that moment on, Arslan became one of al-Hilali's most trusted friends and served, in some ways at least, as his new role model. On the one hand, the two men bonded as accomplished

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writers who espoused the same anticolonial cause and shared the same awareness of Muslim interconnectedness across boundaries. But on the other, they came from different generations and were not of equal standing. Al-Hilali was in his early forties when he first met Arslan, but the latter was twenty-five years his senior and already a monument within the circles of Islamic reform. There is no doubt that Arslan greatly impressed al-Hilali, who named his first son Shakib as a token of his admiration for the emir.[21]

Arslan was indeed a unique character. Beyond his innumerable international contacts, he epitomized the deterritorialized Muslim activist. When he fled to Europe as a political refugee in 1918, he had expected to stay abroad only temporarily. Yet Arslan failed to convert his former Ottoman citizenship into Lebanese citizenship at a time when the political landscape of the Middle East was rapidly and drastically changing. As a result, he remained stranded in neutral Switzerland, did not legally belong to any country, and was unable to travel until King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Al Saʿud granted him honorary Hijazi citizenship and provided him with a passport.[22] Although he briefly visited many Arab countries thereafter, he never lived permanently in any of them. Colonial authorities even forbade him to return to his native Lebanon. He only went back in 1946, a few months prior to his death. Uprooted and living outside the symbolic boundaries of the Muslim world, he belonged everywhere and nowhere at the same time. He wrote extensively, both in French and in Arabic, and his devotion to anticolonialism and Islamic causes knew no geographic, political, or ethnic boundaries.

Of all the books that Arslan authored, his famous 1930 treatise, *Limādhā taʾakhkhara al-muslimūm wa limādhā taqaddama ghayruhum* (Why Muslims have become backward while others have advanced), is perhaps the one that is most imbued with the spirit of Islamic nationalism. In raising awareness of the plight of his coreligionists from Morocco to China and from India to the Caucasus, he depicted a Muslim community that shared more than just a common religion; it shared a common history and, above all, a common sociopolitical future. All Muslims, regardless of where they lived, were dealing with the same challenges and were, therefore, in need of the same solution. Only through their allegiance and devotion to the *umma*, which Arslan conceived as analogous to a modern nation, could these various Muslims tap into their potential communal strength and break out

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of their backwardness. Progress, in other words, demanded that Muslims model their esprit de corps after nationalism—the most prominent feature of western European states in the interwar era. For all its criticism of colonial policies, Arslan's treatise was based on the assumption that the dominance of Europeans on the global scene was inextricably linked to the strength of their national sentiments.

For Arslan, the question was not only whether Muslims should adopt the nationalist paradigm of the West but also whether this paradigm really entailed the rejection of religion. His answer to the first part of the question was easy. If Muslims examined the affairs of Europe, they would see that nationalist resolve translated into collective survival, dynamism, and power. They would realize how strong and united Frenchmen, Germans, and Italians stood as nations; how nationalism allowed Poland to resist Russia's regional designs; and how small entities such as the Baltic states, Croatia, and Serbia resisted assimilation and retained their independence by means of their national determination.[23] Muslims, therefore, had to adopt the nationalist paradigm, but they did not have to turn away from religion in the process. Those who believed so were grossly mistaken, Arslan argued, because proper emulation of European society would in fact require Muslims to remain attached to the core of their own "national" identity, which, by definition, was Islamic. Far from brushing aside the past in the name of progress, nationalism was nothing but the rousing celebration of each community's heritage, including religion. Christianity was over nineteen centuries old, Arslan noted, and yet it continued to bolster the national character of all European societies, which, ironically, were never branded as reactionary.[24] His conclusion was that religion itself did not perpetuate backwardness: lack of national sentiments did. The key for Muslims was, therefore, to borrow the most powerful and inspiring dimensions of nationalism, tailor them to the needs of the *umma*, and ward off any undue allegiance to other forms of identification (be it ethnic, civic, or territorial).

These ideas struck a chord with al-Hilali, who wrote a rave review of Arslan's book in *al-Fath* and rehashed many of the author's views over the years.[25] But the two men differed with respect to their treatment of Islam. When Arslan addressed the issue of Muslim unity and identity, he did so from the viewpoint of a political activist rather than a religious specialist. Although he often hinted that certain Muslims were traitors to the Islamic

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nation, he never quite delved into questions of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. As William L. Cleveland put it:

> He did not provide a critical review of the classical jurists, he constructed no *tafsir*, he offered no reexamination of *hadith*. It is fair to Arslan to conclude that his technique was more akin to al-Afghani's than to ʿAbduh's. Arslan had no time for theological finesse, and his writings on Islam were never far removed from the political events he watched so closely.[26]

For the same reason, Arslan did not care to present himself as a Salafi, and he hardly ever used the word to describe others. When he did, it was with some indifference. In one rare instance, he spoke of the Salafis and the Sufis as two opposite religious groups but purposefully avoided elevating one over the other.[27] This is not surprising given that Arslan was born to a Druze family and remained conscious that "his very standing as a believer was not beyond question."[28] Therefore, he was usually disposed to support all Muslims who either challenged colonial rule or resisted imperialism, regardless of their religious views. Rida tried to present Arslan as a Salafi in creed at least once, but his attempt rang somewhat hollow and mirrored his previous efforts at portraying ʿAbduh in a similar fashion.[29] In reality, Arslan's Salafi associates knew that the emir had little interest in religious technicalities. He readily eschewed the theological principles of Salafism in order to rally as many Muslims as possible to the cause of Islamic nationalism. His religious flexibility—or laxity—was at times so conspicuous that al-Bitar once dared to publicly reprove the emir for glossing over questions of orthodoxy.[30]

Al-Hilali, by contrast, was a self-proclaimed Salafi whose purist tendencies were tempered by Islamic nationalist considerations. For him, finding the right balance between religious integrity and pragmatism was a constant challenge. His move to Europe and his relationship with Arslan initially encouraged him to keep deemphasizing his Salafi convictions, but it did not take long before al-Hilali switched priorities. Unlike Arslan, he always took more interest in religion than in politics. In that sense, the two men complemented each other, and it could even be said that al-Hilali was Arslan's religious alter ego. They were, it seems, well aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. With respect to political and historical matters, al-Hilali confessed that the emir was far more knowledgeable

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than he was. But when it came to religious issues, the roles were reversed. Al-Hilali claims that Arslan was in the habit of consulting him and always showed admiration for his answers.[31] However romanticized this statement may be, it remains that religious matters were of paramount concern for al-Hilali. The reason he moved to Europe was not to earn a degree in sociology, philosophy, or political science. He wanted to become a Western-trained specialist of Islam and thus enjoy the benefits that flowed from being an Orientalist.

It was Arslan who provided the forty-two-year-old Moroccan Salafi with his first opportunity to undertake graduate studies and obtain his Western "scholarly passport." The emir had connections in Germany and recommended al-Hilali, who was then offered a position of lecturer in Arabic and Arabic literature at the University of Bonn.[32] The salary allowed al-Hilali to register as a student in Oriental studies and to pay for tuition. Although he had originally wanted to study in Britain, he could not afford the costs there. He, therefore, moved to Nazi Germany in the fall of 1936 and entered the University of Bonn, where he stayed for nearly three years. He spent his first months studying German until he obtained a diploma attesting to his proficiency in that language. He then began working on a dissertation while accepting scholarly contracts on the side. Among them was a collaboration with the German Orientalist Paul Kahle (d. 1964) on the painstaking translation of old Arabic texts.[33] Kahle, who played an important role in al-Hilali's academic journey, was the director of the Oriental Seminar at the University of Bonn. He occupied that position from 1923 until his suspension in November 1938 for lack of Nazi credentials, which led to his escape to Britain four months later.[34]

Al-Hilali had been working on his dissertation for over a year when Wilhelm Heffening (d. 1944), who had just replaced Kahle, refused to accept it. Because a scholar from Cambridge had recently written on a similar topic, Heffening argued that he could not accept al-Hilali's dissertation. Whether or not the true reason behind this refusal was the professor's personal hostility toward his Moroccan student (as the latter claimed), al-Hilali felt that he had been ridiculed and that he had reached a dead end. Without a dissertation to submit, he was unable to graduate and reap any benefit from the time and money he had already invested. It was roughly at that moment, in early 1939, that he received an intriguing invitation from Berlin. The Nazi Ministry of Propaganda was about to inaugurate a

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shortwave radio station in Arabic, and the authorities were looking for competent collaborators. Because al-Hilali no longer had any reason to stay in Bonn, he relocated to the capital and agreed to work for the Berlin Arabic Radio, first as a proofreader and linguistic authority (*marji*ᶜ *lughawī*) and then as a speaker when the station went on the air in April 1939.[35] In addition, he requested to transfer to the University of Berlin. When the government responded favorably, he became, once again, a lecturer and a student.

The doctoral dissertation that he submitted to the University of Berlin was a German translation of and commentary on the introduction of *al-Jamāhir fī ma*ᶜ*rifat al-jawāhir*, a book on mineralogy written by the medieval scholar al-Biruni (d. 1048).[36] It was the same dissertation that Heffening had previously refused at the University of Bonn. The topic was Kahle's idea: he had proposed it to al-Hilali early on in his graduate studies and was also responsible for introducing the primary source to him.[37] When al-Hilali settled in Germany, Kahle had already developed an interest in al-Biruni's work on mineralogy, as one article he published in 1936 clearly attests.[38] In Bonn, he invited his Moroccan student to assist him with his work on two different manuscripts of *al-Jamāhir*, at which point al-Hilali agreed to devote his doctoral dissertation to the opening section of the text.[39]

Even though al-Hilali did not come up with the idea of writing on al-Biruni, his willingness to concentrate on such an open-minded medieval polymath is noteworthy. Al-Biruni was neither an exponent nor an exemplar of Islamic purism; he was a multifaceted scientist with one of the most investigative minds of his time. Building on the Greek and Indian traditions, he wrote on mathematics, medicine, and astronomy, among other fields. Along with the natural sciences, he delved into human sciences and had a marked interest in politics and history. A number of his investigations focused, for instance, on non-Muslim societies as well as Muslim groups that were traditionally considered heretical.[40] In one of his most famous treatises, often shortened as *Kitāb al-Hind*, he presented a remarkably dispassionate account of his observations and research in India. His sociological explanation of idol worship and pictorial representations of God, which he saw as consequences of a religion practiced by uneducated masses, stood out as particularly sympathetic. It virtually equated true Hinduism with monotheism, on a par with Christianity and Judaism.[41]

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There is no doubt that some of al-Biruni's opinions and intellectual dispositions ran against al-Hilali's purist convictions. In a fatwa issued in 1942, al-Hilali strongly disapproved of all pictorial representations of God and humans—even mental ones—and indirectly accused Hindus of having led Muslims astray with their paganism and idol worship.[42] Why, then, did he follow up on Kahle's suggestion to work on a medieval Muslim scholar whose religious views hardly met Salafi standards? Considering al-Hilali's religious orientation, the translation of a treatise by Ibn Taymiyya would have been equally fitting, if not more appropriate. Yet his final choice need not appear dumbfounding. The work of al-Biruni was in fact a suitable topic insofar as it fueled Islamic nationalism. A dissertation on *al-Jamāhir* written by a Muslim student in the heart of modern Europe would not only provide a source of great collective pride but also present Islam in the most positive light possible. Reviving the legacy of al-Biruni suggested that Muslims, who were once dynamic trailblazers in the realm of science, could rival and even surpass Westerners in the modern era without having to renounce their religion. From this perspective, al-Biruni had even greater potential to rouse Islamic national sentiments than Ibn Taymiyya. No wonder that al-Hilali used al-Biruni as a ram with which to batter Western prejudices toward Islam.

More specifically, al-Hilali sought to contradict what he thought were insulting insinuations in the work of the German scholar Edward Sachau (d. 1930) to the effect that a luminary such as al-Biruni must not have been a sincere believer—or at least not an orthodox one. On careful examination, it appears that al-Hilali exaggerated the significance and hostility of a few remarks that Sachau made in passing in the preface of his translation of al-Biruni's *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*. But the creation of a straw man served al-Hilali's polemical purposes. To the readers of *al-Fath*, he proclaimed in 1939 that the goal of his doctoral studies was to set the record straight and to expose the lies of Orientalists by proving that al-Biruni was a sincere Muslim and, above all, a good Sunni—not a Shiʿi, as Sachau had (allegedly) claimed. Those who denied these truths were enemies of Islam.[43]

If we are to believe al-Hilali, his stance on al-Biruni's religious identity turned his dissertation defense into a trying experience. He depicted it as an almost heroic battle between a powerful Orientalist and a lone Muslim exile defending the honor of the *umma* on foreign soil. On the day of his

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defense, al-Hilali sat before a committee of ten Western scholars, including Carl Brockelmann (d. 1956), the famous German Orientalist and historian of Arabic literature. Brockelmann, we are told, shared Sachau's views and, therefore, wanted to fail al-Hilali. He disagreed with the contention that al-Biruni was a devout Muslim, as if al-Biruni had too much interest in science and was too rational to be anything but a freethinker. But al-Hilali made his case, and the other members of the dissertation committee agreed with him. They all refuted Brockelmann's interpretation and voted in favor of the revisionist argument. In the end, al-Hilali writes, truth, reason, and freedom of thought prevailed: the lone Muslim student triumphed over the greatest Orientalist of his time.[44] As a result, he earned his PhD in 1940 and became the first Moroccan graduate of the University of Berlin. He took on the title of Doctor (*al-duktūr*), which he bore as a badge of honor and never abandoned thereafter. Decades later, in Saudi Arabia, al-Hilali still insisted on being called Doctor rather than shaykh.[45]

It is likely that al-Hilali framed the narrative of his dissertation defense to elicit an emotional response from his Arab and Muslim readers, just as he had previously exaggerated Sachau's claims in the pages of *al-Fath*. In the context of the struggle against European imperialism, this was understandable. Yet al-Hilali never launched an all-out critique of the Orientalists or Western academia. After all, he, too, was part of the system. In 1940, he confirmed his admission into the German scholarly community by publishing a short article on the caste-like aspects of tribalism in the Arabian Peninsula, which appeared in the respected journal *Die Welt des Islams*.[46] He was truly fascinated by the methodology, intellectual rigor, and positivism of Western scholarship, though he resented the condescending view of Islam that dominated Orientalist circles. There were some exceptions, of course. He lauded his supervisor at the University of Berlin, Richard Hartmann (d. 1965), for his dedication to academic freedom, his lack of bias, and his high scholarly standards. However, al-Hilali remarked that men such as Hartmann were not common, for most European Orientalists in France, Britain, and Scandinavia had a deep-seated antipathy toward Islam.[47]

Now that he possessed the necessary training and credibility to defeat these Orientalists at their own game, al-Hilali grew even more confident in his ability to debate misguided Muslims and leave them speechless. To be sure, his studies in Bonn and Berlin had not transformed his approach to Islam or his religious epistemology. On the contrary, the empirical and

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positivist nature of German Orientalism reinforced his scripturalist leanings. After graduation, he often wrote in the manner of his European colleagues, making extensive use of footnotes, text-based demonstrations, and philological arguments, which often served to support essentialist conclusions about Salafi Islam. When he worked with primary sources that he deemed trustworthy—mainly Islamic scriptures—he displayed an unwavering confidence in the concept of objectivity and the idea that "truth is manifest," meaning it was there for everyone to see as long as it was not suppressed or distorted by personal whims and subjective input.[48] Much like the positivist historian Fustel de Coulanges (d. 1889), al-Hilali believed with certainty that the epitome of scientific work consisted in identifying reliable primary sources and letting them speak for themselves.[49] From a scholarly perspective, then, the thought that someone might consider him antimodern would have struck him as ludicrous. In his methodology and reification of Islam, he was no less "scientific" than other Orientalists. He did not hesitate to assert what Islam was and was not. The main difference between them is that al-Hilali's work was meant to idealize rather than denigrate this reified Islam.

Just as al-Hilali had mixed feelings about Orientalists, he had mixed feelings about western Europe in general. During the nearly six years that he spent in Nazi Germany, he discovered a new cultural environment and also witnessed the social, political, and ideological unrest that characterized the region in the late 1930s and early 1940s. His reactions to these experiences ranged from fascination to aversion and were not always what we might expect. For example, he rejected the cliché that the West was inherently materialistic. On the contrary, he raved about the Europeans' deep attachment to their religion and unparalleled degree of religious freedom: "Europeans have something that we might rightly call 'tolerance' [*tasāmuḥ*], whereby they do not object to the beliefs and rituals of others. . . . You can mingle with [people of] all social classes and speak with them about all topics for a long time, and you never hear a word against religion."[50] This was a gross generalization, of course, but he found it inspiring. After listening to the BBC and other radio stations and after discussing his observations with individuals from neighboring states, he concluded that such tolerance was not specific to Germany. Through wisdom, seriousness, and reason, he wrote, the most advanced countries of Europe have managed to remain deeply religious while avoiding religious

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quarrels. The *umma* would do well to follow this example—an argument strongly reminiscent of Arslan's idea that to emulate the West is to hold onto religion.

Al-Hilali praised this code of ethics in theory but did not always abide by it in his own interactions with Muslims and non-Muslims. He loved to challenge the religious beliefs of locals, and at times, he could not resist the temptation to bring European Christians and Jews to admit that their religious traditions were riddled with errors and contradictions. As much as he admired their religiosity, he regarded their belief systems with disdain. Catholicism, in particular, struck him as absurd, burdensome, and unfair. Thus, in many of the texts he wrote while in Germany, we find the idea that Europe was lagging behind in the moral and legal realms. As an Islamic nationalist, he could not project an overly positive image of Western society. No doubt Europeans were more advanced than Muslims, as Arslan had argued, but they could not possibly be more advanced in all things; otherwise, Islam would prove irrelevant. Yet if Europe was not inherently materialistic and if it did not lack spirituality, what were the causes of its moral decrepitude? According to al-Hilali, Christianity and the arbitrariness of its clergy were partly to blame. Marriages between Protestants and Catholics were not permitted, civil unions were considered grounds for excommunication, and divorces were nearly impossible to obtain, causing al-Hilali to estimate that, as a result, 60 percent of German women were spinsters (*ʿawānis*), either by choice or by force of circumstance.[51]

Al-Hilali's conclusions were based on anecdotal evidence and hearsay, but being an exile in the West gave him the privilege of writing with the authority of an eyewitness. To the readers of *al-Fath*, he was the man who provided reliable firsthand accounts of the grandeur and malaise of European society. The message he sought to convey was that Islam and the *shariʿa* provided a simpler and superior alternative to Christianity and would prevent these social ills from appearing. He did not mean to say that the situation of women in Muslim-majority countries was perfect. (Without being specific, he noted that many Muslims had become excessively zealous and narrow-minded about the concealment of women since the medieval period, thereby deviating from the proverbial tolerance of the pious ancestors.) He nevertheless insisted that the status of women in modern Europe was still lower than in any Muslim society.

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But there was also a type of immorality that Christian institutions could not have condoned. According to al-Hilali, local mores were to blame for widespread promiscuity. He wrote with revulsion about the indecency of Germans who flirted, dated, danced together, and most likely had sexual encounters. Not only that—they also avoided marriage on purpose so as to enjoy this lifestyle well into their twenties. He was no less troubled by the behavior of some European wives who failed to defer to their husbands, just as he was shocked by the disrespect of men who treated women as sexual objects. In the Berlin subway, he once noticed that no gentleman was willing to give up his seat to an old woman, whereas dozens would suddenly volunteer when a young and attractive girl entered.[52] Such moral laxity was definitely not a sign of progress, yet these shameful aspects of life in the West too often lured gullible young Muslims. When the son of ʿAbd al-Zahir Abu al-Samh wrote to al-Hilali in late 1938 and expressed the desire to go to Europe, al-Hilali tried to discourage him. He knew the young man from Alexandria and Mecca and had hosted him for a week in Lucknow. But this time he advised him to stay home: "I do not think that a reasonable person would recommend residing in Europe, except out of necessity and [then only] to some extent."[53] Al-Hilali obviously thought that his friend's son was too young and too impressionable to risk coming to Europe. He instead told him that Egypt had much to offer, even for someone interested in science.

As a middle-aged and wiser man, al-Hilali considered himself to be less vulnerable to these dangers. For all his conservative values, he did not remain aloof, nor did he fraternize exclusively with his fellow Muslims. Rather, he was willing to mingle with Europeans of both genders. It is worth noting that many of the individuals from whom he collected information about Europe for his articles in the Arab press were women. One of them was the landlady from whom he rented a room in Bonn. Al-Hilali described her as a pious and honorable woman who was so devoted to her Christian faith that she treated religion as a form of nationalism. This was precisely the kind of attitude he wanted to instill in his Muslim readers, so he cited her as an example in *al-Fath*.[54] After moving to Berlin, he rented a room from another landlady, Anna Wogatzki, whom he eventually married.

At the political level, al-Hilali had a marked preference for National Socialism and spoke highly of Hitler and the Nazi government. Echoing the

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products of Goebbel's propaganda machine, he explained that the Nazis had taken a country on the brink of ruin—namely, the powerless and disunited Weimar Republic with its seven million unemployed, its corrupted Jewish fifth column, and its rampant crime—and miraculously transformed it into an economic and military force. Al-Hilali not only hailed Nazi Germany as a potent example of the power of nationalism but also argued that such an efficient political system was so similar to the ideal of Islamic governance that Nazis must have borrowed some of their principles from Islam. He saw nothing despotic about Hitler's rule and considered Nazi ideology to be far better than democracy. This was all the more true, he claimed, given that two of the greatest so-called democracies, France and Britain, were colonial powers that denied Muslims their rights. In any democracy, in fact, the proliferation of deceptive political parties and the institutionalization of dispute were unhealthy features that could lead only to chaos within a nation.[55]

The underlying message was clear: Muslims were theoretically capable of the same achievements as the Nazis and should, therefore, aspire to emulate the organic nationalism of the Germans. The only political drawback of National Socialism was that it narrowed the idea of nation to a particular people and differentiated between individuals on the basis of race and color. Al-Hilali was not insensitive to racial stigmatization in Nazi Germany, and it is likely that he experienced discrimination. His writings suggest that he may have been mistaken for a Jew, and he was mistaken for being Japanese at least once. But although he condemned racial ideologies, he did little to undermine the heart of Nazi discourse. Instead, he strove to argue that most Arabs, Iranians, Turks, and Berbers were in fact white.[56] Be that as it may, he proclaimed the superiority of Islam as a universal and race-blind basis for nationalism.

As long as he was in Europe, al-Hilali appears to have believed that sectarianism needed to be avoided. After all, he remarked, German Catholics and Protestants had put their differences aside and worked together for the higher interests of their nation, and the results were stunning. Muslims should do the same for the *umma*. However, when he moved to the Spanish protectorate of Morocco a few years later, he qualified his views and tried to reassert the primacy of Salafi standards. But by then, his understanding of Salafism was quite different from the understanding that prevailed in his home country.

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Among the Modernist Salafis of Morocco, 1942–1947

Al-Hilali remained secretive regarding his departure from Germany. For reasons that are not entirely clear, life in Berlin became difficult for him after the outbreak of the Second World War. In March 1942, he decided to return to his native Morocco for the first time in twenty years. He was on a mission. Hajj Amin al-Husayni (d. 1974), the infamous mufti of Jerusalem who had escaped to Nazi Germany in 1941, asked him to go to Tetouan to deliver an oral message to ʿAbd al-Khaliq al-Turris (d. 1970), the leader of the Party of National Reform (Ḥizb al-Iṣlāḥ al-Waṭanī) in the Spanish zone. Al-Hilali never revealed what the message was; he said only that it was political in nature and that it pertained to the welfare and higher interests of Muslims.[57] According to the French historian Charles-Robert Ageron, he had been charged with going to northern Morocco to recommend the fusion of three local nationalist parties—namely, those of al-Turris, Muhammad al-Makki al-Nasiri (d. 1994), and Ibrahim al-Wazzani.[58] Umar Ryad, for his part, suggests that the mufti sought to establish a center for Arab legions in North Africa.[59] In any case, al-Hilali's trip to northern Morocco was supposed to be temporary. His plan was to return to Berlin as soon as the mission was over. But because he did not possess the appropriate travel documents, he was forced to use a forged passport—a detail that the Spanish authorities easily noticed. What he expected to be a short trip ended up lasting five years.

Evidently, al-Hilali continued to develop a vast transnational network of connections. Chief among his new associates was, of course, the mufti of Jerusalem, who was a friend of Arslan and a graduate of Rida's Dar al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshad. Benefiting from a generous Nazi subsidy during his exile, Hajj Amin was no less generous toward al-Hilali. The latter claims that Hajj Amin offered him large sums of money in Berlin, paid for his trip to Morocco, and continued to send him funds afterward. The mufti even provided him with a personal secretary (*kātib*), whose services he must have appreciated, for he had already turned blind to the point of being unable to read. Al-Hilali had started to lose his sight during his stay in Germany, at which point he considered learning Braille.[60]

As for al-Turris (also known as Torrès), he, too, had met Arslan during the latter's visit to Tetouan in 1930. Along with other Moroccan nationalists such as al-Fasi, al-Nasiri, and Muhammad Dawud (d. 1984), he remained

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in contact with the emir. Although al-Turris attached more importance to the cause of Moroccan nationalism than to Islamic reform, he did not regard these two goals as incompatible. He himself had studied briefly at the Qarawiyyin in Fes and at al-Azhar in Cairo. Yet he was too enthralled with politics to find much interest in religious classes and issues.[61] Nevertheless, he and the other Moroccan nationalists often collaborated with each other (or at least tolerated each other) for the greater cause of anticolonialism, regardless of their respective views on religion.

Al-Hilali accepted this situation and agreed that circumstances required their collaboration. However, after twenty years of absence, he was a peculiar figure in the Moroccan religious landscape. With his purist inclinations and connections to both hadith specialists in India and Wahhabi scholars in Saudi Arabia, he stood out as a rather difficult reformer. The contrast was even greater when one considers that Moroccan activists had started to develop a parallel and modernist understanding of Salafism. As noted in chapter 1, some Moroccan religious scholars knew the traditional meaning of the technical term *salafī* and used it in its theological sense, even though the word rarely appeared in the literature. There are additional examples in the writings of Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Hajwi in the 1920s and ʿAbdallah Gannun in the 1930s.[62] At the same time, other Moroccan reformers who were at the forefront of the anticolonial struggle started employing the term in a way that was far more consistent with Orientalist scholarship. This was a gradual process rather than an abrupt change. In North Africa, as in the Arab East, the popularization and commodification of the term *Salafi* yielded a fair amount of conceptual looseness at first. It was precisely during this period of wild conceptualization that the transition began.

In 1929, Ahmad Balafrij, a native of Rabat who had attended King Fuʾad University in Cairo and was now studying at the Sorbonne in Paris, gave an indication of things to come. In an article published in Egypt, he made a claim that would become commonplace in Moroccan reformist circles: that Abu Shuʿayb al-Dukkali and Muhammad ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi were among the Salafi scholars (*al-ʿulamāʾ al-salafiyyīn*) who taught the Qurʾan and the Sunna and combated blind imitation and stagnancy.[63] A careful religious specialist, of course, might have argued that someone must do more than simply rely on the scriptures and call for renewal to be considered a Salafi. Theology was the crux of the matter. That said, Balafrij was

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neither the first nor the last activist to define what it meant to be a Salafi in such general terms. Yet from the mid-twentieth century on, Moroccan reformers took the additional step of formally and unequivocally equating the terms *Salafi* and *Salafism* with the movement of Islamic modernism spearheaded by al-Afghani, ʿAbduh, and Rida. In doing so, they made the same conceptual mistake that Massignon did in 1919 and reproduced the same ahistorical category.

Other North African reformers came close to making a similar conflation. At times, Algerians writing in journals such as *al-Shihab* and *al-Basaʾir* used "reformers [*iṣlāḥiyyīn*]" and "Salafis [*salafiyyīn*]" so casually that one could hardly distinguish between the two. For rhetorical effect, they also made statements that were unnecessarily confusing. In 1936, a few months after Rida passed away, Abu Yaʿla al-Zawawi declared: "We [reformers] live and die emulating our pious ancestors [*salafinā al-ṣāliḥ*], be they old or recent, such as the two shaykhs, Jamal al-Din [al-Afghani] and Muhammad ʿAbduh, and our friend Rashid Rida."[64] By claiming that these three figures counted among the *salaf* and by explaining that all good things came to Muslims who followed them, al-Zawawi made it easy for his readers to think that any Islamic modernist deserved to be called a Salafi. Some probably reached that conclusion. Yet, to my knowledge, neither he nor other leading Algerian reformers of the colonial period carried this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion. They never developed the notion of modernist Salafism as clearly as their Moroccan counterparts.

The person most responsible for articulating this parallel version of Salafism in Arabic was ʿAllal al-Fasi. Born in Fes in 1910 into a family of religious scholars, he received a traditional education at the Qarawiyyin and, like al-Hilali, was a protégé of Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi. Upon graduation, he taught in a Free School and quickly became involved in anticolonial activities. Despite his exile to Gabon and the Congo from 1937 to 1946 and a lengthy stay in Egypt from 1947 to 1956, he remained in contact with reformers at home and continued to serve as one of the most influential religious intellectuals, if not the most influential, of the Moroccan nationalist movement. From the beginning, he gave the terms *Salafi* and *Salafism* a loose interpretation that bore little relation to neo-Hanbali theology. In private letters he wrote from Fes to his fellow reformer Muhammad Dawud in Tetouan between 1935 and 1936, he confessed that the writings of ʿAbduh and Rida were among the Salafi books (*al-kutub al-salafiyya*)

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that he wanted Moroccan students to read. Al-Fasi also spoke of how al-Afghani, ʿAbduh, and Rida influenced the Moroccan Salafi program (*al-manhaj al-salafī al-maghribī*), which he left undefined.[65] More surprising is the advice that he gave to Muhammad Dawud, who was actively involved in the field of education in the Spanish protectorate and sought to devise a proper curriculum. Al-Fasi told him that thick books should be avoided because students did not like to read them. Hence, he wrote, the Qurʾanic exegesis of Ibn Kathir (d. 1373) should be replaced by more concise ones, such as the *tafsīr* of al-Nasafi (d. 1310) or the *tafsīr* of Ibn Juzay al-Kalbi (d. 1356). If bulky works of exegesis were really necessary, then Rida's *Tafsīr al-Manār* would be more suitable.[66]

What is striking about these remarks is not only how al-Fasi used Salafi labels in a nontechnical way but also how he promoted pedagogical efficiency at the expense of neo-Hanbali theology. The suggestion to replace the exegesis of a hadith master and student of Ibn Taymiyya like Ibn Kathir with that of a Maturidi scholar like al-Nasafi ran counter to Salafi orthodoxy, even by the standards of the 1930s. Today, al-Nasafi is a frequent target of purist Salafis from Central Asia: in Arabic, they argue that he was one of the speculative theologians who destroyed (*nasafa*) the Salafi creed—a pun on his name, which in fact indicates that he was from the city of Nasaf in present-day Uzbekistan. As for the Ashʿari exegete Ibn Juzay, his take on the divine attributes was also questionable because he wavered between the doctrine of the *salaf* and the metaphorical interpretation of the *khalaf*.[67] On this question, his Qurʾanic exegesis is hardly a Salafi reference.

As time went on, it became obvious that al-Fasi either willfully or unwittingly ignored the theological origins of the label *Salafi*. For him, Salafism designated a movement of Islamic renewal, broadly conceived. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, his definition of it was so general as to include virtually any reformer since the ninth century. Anyone who tried to stem the decline of the *umma*, who reaffirmed the principle of *tawḥīd*, who advocated Islamic law, or who opposed despotism—in other words, anyone who participated in the renaissance of the Muslim community in one way or another—deserved to be considered a proponent of the Salafi movement. According to al-Fasi, even Ibn Rushd (Averroes) was a Salafi, along with Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab and the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.[68] Although there were differences in the various narratives of Salafism that al-Fasi constructed in his writings, they all emphasized al-Afghani

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and ʿAbduh as key figures.[69] Al-Fasi insisted that these two activists were the chief makers of the modern iteration of Salafism. With al-Afghani, the movement took on a new aspect and started advancing a comprehensive program of religious, intellectual, social, and political reform. In the process, al-Fasi claimed, Salafism became a "constructive [*aṣbaḥat tahtammu bi-l-bināʾ*]" rather than a purely "destructive [*ilā jānib ihtimāmihā bi-l-hadm*]" or purifying effort. As for ʿAbduh, his contribution was so instrumental that "the Salafi school came to bear his name."[70]

If ʿAbduh was a Salafi, according to al-Fasi, it was not because of his approach to theology. It was because of his dedication to the renewal of Islam and the *umma*. True, ʿAbduh was against incarnationism (*ḥulūl*), against Ibn ʿArabi's notion of oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), and against Sufi excesses in general, as al-Fasi noted. Yet, unlike most of his counterparts in the Arab East, al-Fasi applauded the fact that ʿAbduh remained a rationalist theologian who endorsed *kalām* and professed the doctrine of free will in the manner of both Maturidis and later Ashʿaris such as al-Juwayni (d. 1085).[71] The reason is that, for al-Fasi, Salafism had nothing to do with the interpretation of divine attributes and was not anchored in any particular theological doctrine. Hence, he saw no contradiction in claiming that Salafism thrived in Morocco while also claiming that all Moroccan Muslims were Ashʿari in creed and Maliki in law.[72] "True Salafism [*al-salafiyya al-ṣaḥīḥa*]," he wrote, was to act in accordance with the Book of God and the Sunna, to be in agreement with the requirements of "evolving modes of thought [*al-taṭawwur fī asālīb al-fahm wa-l-taqdīr li-l-ashyāʾ*]," to care for reason, and to reflect on the humanist principles that the Qurʾan made clear.[73]

It is, of course, possible that al-Fasi came to these conclusions independently and that, like Massignon before him, he arbitrarily equated *salafiyya* with Islamic modernism. Yet one must remember that the foundations of this conceptually misleading notion of Salafism were already accessible to Muslim activists who had direct or indirect knowledge of European scholarship. This was the case with ʿUthman Amin (d. 1978), the Egyptian philosopher whose work was known to al-Fasi. Amin had written a doctoral dissertation on ʿAbduh at the Sorbonne in the 1930s and had made extensive use of Orientalist scholarship on Salafism. In 1944, commenting on the work of Laoust, it seemed normal to him to speak of "the Salafi and modernist movement of Muhammad Abduh."[74]

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This was also the case with al-Fasi. If we are to believe his own recollections, he encountered the Orientalist construction of Salafism in the mid-1920s, when Émile Dermenghem, then a journalist sent from Paris to Morocco to cover the Rif war, allegedly wrote a piece on the Salafi movement.[75] (Al-Fasi does not specify what piece of writing it was.) During his stay, Dermenghem befriended a number of young Moroccan reformers, including al-Fasi, his cousin Muhammad al-Fasi, and Balafrij.[76] But Dermenghem's understanding of Salafism did not come from them. On the contrary, it came from Massignon's work, as evidenced by the articles he published in 1925 and 1926, the two years during which he lived in Morocco. It was one thing for Dermenghem to claim that young Moroccan "progressives" and "liberal reformers" were combining classical Arabic culture with the classical French culture of Molière and Rousseau, but quite another to argue that these Islamic modernists were part of the Salafi movement that was born in India in the early nineteenth century.[77] This last statement, in particular, is a giveaway: it reveals that Dermenghem borrowed directly from Massignon's first narrative of *salafiyya*, published in the *Revue du monde musulman* in 1919.

How much al-Fasi really knew about Dermenghem's understanding of Salafism in the mid-1920s is an open question. But in the late 1940s, his insistence that an intellectual connection existed between himself and a European commentator on Salafism (which is precisely how al-Fasi described Dermenghem) is revealing. Not only did such connections exist, but also they were cordial and allowed mutual influence to occur without any suspicion. Al-Fasi appreciated what Dermenghem said about Salafism and took pride in stating that the man was his friend and that he had visited him in his Parisian home in 1933. (As it turns out, al-Fasi also knew Massignon personally and interacted with him both in Paris and in Cairo.[78]) But unlike other Muslim reformers, al-Fasi had little reservation toward Orientalist scholarship as long as it was favorable to Morocco and Islamic modernism. Nor did he question the concepts that Arab intellectuals trained in Europe were using in the mid-twentieth century. For example, we know that in the 1950s al-Fasi relied on a book in Arabic about modern Islamic thought in which the Egyptian author, Muhammad al-Bahi, analyzed the alleged Salafism of ʿAbduh. Al-Bahi's source, it turns out, was Sir Hamilton Gibb's 1949 book *Mohammedanism*, which was itself based on Massignon's flawed conceptual assumptions.[79] It did not occur to al-Fasi that al-Bahi

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might be wrong. On the contrary, al-Bahi confirmed what Dermenghem and others had been claiming for years—namely, that Salafism stood for Islamic modernism à la ʿAbduh.

A similar phenomenon took place in Europe and North America, where scholars interested in Morocco read al-Fasi's work and found further evidence—or so they thought—that Salafism was a grand movement of Islamic modernism. This can be seen, for example, in Douglas Ashford's 1961 book *Political Change in Morocco*.[80] Meanwhile, in a 1963 article that served as a reference for countless students of North African affairs, Jamil Abun-Nasr, then a recent graduate from Oxford, relied heavily on al-Fasi's work to explain the nature of Moroccan Salafism to a Western audience.[81] In the United States, too, John P. Halstead published an influential study that corroborated this view of Salafism as a scripturalist-cum-modernist movement of reform. The Moroccan nationalists he interviewed in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including al-Fasi, had no reason to dispute this interpretation.[82] Therefore, and regardless of its dubious conceptual origins, the notion of modernist Salafism took on a life of its own in Morocco. Through a process of mutual reinforcement between Western analysts and local activists, it became a truly indigenous category. It also became widespread. In the wake of al-Fasi, many other Moroccan scholars and activists used the concept in a modernist sense from the mid-twentieth century onward.

In the Arab East, by contrast, this version of Salafism made little headway except among certain intellectuals who did not belong to, or were on the fringe of, Salafi circles. There a greater proportion of reformers appear to have been aware of the theological origins of the label *Salafi*. Perhaps for that reason, they took Western scholarship with a grain of salt. In 1933, when the team of *al-Fath* decided to translate and reprint an article Laoust had written for a special issue of the Cairo-based journal *La Bourse égyptienne*, it did not offer an exact Arabic rendition of the original French text. In his article, Laoust distinguished between two major trends of thought in modern Islam, to which he gave no specific names. The first was a movement of religious purism associated with Ibn Taymiyya, whereas the second was a rationalist and modernist movement of reform that began in nineteenth-century India and crystallized with al-Afghani and ʿAbduh.[83] This second movement, of course, was the one that Laoust had previously called Salafism in his seminal article on the subject published in 1932. But this time he refrained from using that term, as he did in most of his

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publications from 1933 onward. (It seems Laoust gradually came to the realization that his definition of *salafiyya* did not correspond to its actual usage in the Arab East.[84]) In any case, the condensed Arabic version of the article that appeared in *al-Fath* offered a more specific categorization. The translator, whose identity is unknown, chose to call the first movement "the Salafi movement,"[85] thereby establishing that the Salafis were those who followed in the footsteps of Ibn Taymiyya and not in the footsteps of al-Afghani and ʿAbduh.

This is how al-Hilali understood the concept as well, but evidence suggests that he encountered the modernist version of Salafism soon after his arrival in Morocco in 1942. For one thing, the contents of his writings changed noticeably. In Morocco, unlike in colonial India, it became clear that instilling a nationalist spirit or demonstrating the compatibility between Islam and nationalism was not a priority. A nationalist movement already existed in his native country, and although it put forward a territorial-statist conception of the nation, it had a strong religious component. To be sure, al-Hilali continued to promote nationalism and the anticolonial struggle, but he now took a vested interest in clarifying what type of Islam the nationalists should follow and how pure Islam should guide their social and political objectives. Thus, while spreading his message of Islamic nationalism, he insisted on orthodoxy and orthopraxy to a much greater extent than before.

Even more telling is the fact that al-Hilali gave his first formal definition of what Salafism meant to him. Evidently, he noticed that Moroccans had a peculiar understanding of the concept—hence his attempt to rectify prevailing misconceptions. In 1942, he devoted two articles to this issue in *al-Hurriyya*, the organ of al-Turris' Party of National Reform. These articles argued that the two concepts of nationalism and Salafism were distinct and should not be confused. Nationalism, al-Hilali wrote, meant respect for the rights of fellow citizens as well as a willingness to make sacrifices for them, to defend them, and to alleviate their suffering. In short, to be a nationalist was to avoid being a traitor to one's own people and political authorities. This attitude was not specific to any religious tradition, for it was common to Muslims and heretics alike. The Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and even pagan peoples were all familiar with nationalism. So, too, were insects: al-Hilali claimed that the lifestyles of ants and bees are among the best examples of sincere nationalism. In particular, he praised

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Islamic nationalism (*al-waṭaniyya al-islāmiyya*) and listed a number of religious scholars who epitomized it, such as Hajj Amin al-Husayni in Palestine, Mustafa al-Maraghi in Egypt, Ibn Badis in Algeria, and the late Rida. He even included a Shiʿi jurist—Muhammad Husayn Al Kashif al-Ghitaʾ (d. 1954) from Iraq.[86]

Al-Hilali wanted his readers to understand that Salafism was an entirely different notion and that even a good nationalist could still be religiously misguided. Salafism, he explained, is the pure Islam of the first three generations, unsullied by innovation. Its followers are the only Muslims who will be granted salvation.[87] (In a later article, he further emphasized the theological specificity of Salafism.[88]) Clearly, if he sought to distinguish between the concepts of Salafism and nationalism, it is because some Moroccans must have failed to make that distinction. This should come as no surprise because the conflation of these two ideas was pronounced in the writings of al-Fasi, who explicitly praised "the mixture of the Salafi call and the nationalist call."[89] Al-Hilali, for his part, reassured his readers that nationalism was indeed compatible with the true Islam of the pious ancestors. But he did not want Moroccans to think that they were Salafis by virtue of espousing the nationalist cause. Unlike al-Fasi, al-Hilali did not conceive of a specifically "modernist" brand of Salafism, nor did he trace the origins of a "modern" type of Salafism to al-Afghani and ʿAbduh.

In the 1940s, then, it became obvious that al-Hilali's conception of a unique and transnational Salafi Islam was in fact a corollary of his conception of a unique Islamic nation. Territorially, he sometimes linked this nation to a historical homeland whose precise boundaries he left unspecified. He mourned the passing of early Islamic society when, under the leadership of the rightly guided caliphs, a North African could travel all the way to the province of Khurasan and still remain within the bounds of a unique state and a unique law.[90] This "great Islamic nation [*al-waṭan al-islāmī al-akbar*]" of the past was built not on Islamic diversity, he noted, but rather on the absence of religious difference. It was thus unacceptable to pretend that disagreements (*ikhtilāfāt*) were a blessing for the *umma*, as one controversial hadith suggests. On the contrary, they were detrimental.[91] Only by returning to the pristine Islam of the *salaf*, who knew no theological and legal schools, would Muslims regain their strength and be on a par with European nations.

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In the Moroccan context, al-Hilali was much less prone to defend religious unity-in-diversity for the sake of nationalism. What Moroccans really needed, he believed, was a better knowledge of purist Salafism. To remedy the situation, he preached in northern Moroccan mosques. He denounced the prevailing Ashʿari creed, opposed the population's over-reliance on the Maliki school of law, and combated Sufism and its numerous manifestations. He also tried to purify religion by teaching hadiths and expounding on proper worship with respect to prayer, fasting, *tawḥīd*, trust in God (*tawakkul*), and so forth.[92] To spread his message, he traveled to many different towns and villages. Besides Tetouan, he went to nearby Martil, Tangier, Chefchaouen (where he married again), Asila, and Ksar al-Kabir.[93] If we are to believe his memoirs, his missionary work generated considerable opposition. An array of local ʿulama insulted him and accused him of causing dissension.

Al-Hilali was indeed relentless at times. He recounts that in late 1946 in Chefchaouen he warned the members of a congregation that they could not read the Qurʾan out loud in the mosque because it was contrary to Salafi practice. He gave the men a number of scriptural proofs and left. When he returned a few days later, the worshippers were still reciting the Qurʾan out loud despite the warnings and the proofs they had been given. Worse, they were reciting as loud as they could so as to taunt him. Displeased, he raised his voice and repeated a hadith that proved the congregation wrong. The emir of Chefchaouen, who was present in the mosque and presumably annoyed by the incident, ordered al-Hilali to keep quiet. The latter replied likewise and added insults until police officers dragged him out of the venue, arrested him, and threw him in jail for about a month.[94] Although he claims that this was an evil trap set up by heretics and colonial authorities, it is likely that his peremptory statements and holier-than-thou attitude irritated some of the locals.

At a more scholarly level, al-Hilali also stood out from most other Moroccan reformers in that he relied heavily on Hanbali and Wahhabi literature. In Tetouan, his teachings drew on works such as *Fatḥ al-majīd*, a famous commentary on Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*. Moreover, he oversaw the publication of a fatwa by Ibn Taymiyya on the visitation of shrines and also wrote a commentary on Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab's treatise *Kashf al-shubuhāt* (The unveiling of doubts), which he used as a textbook for his lessons in mosques. When this last book

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was printed, al-Hilali claims that he managed to sell a thousand copies in northern Morocco alone. He explains that his objective was twofold: to provide the people with a much-needed source on *tawḥīd* and the Sunna and to rehabilitate Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab in Morocco.

Still, al-Hilali assumed that a majority of Moroccans would hesitate to read books by such controversial scholars. The most distrustful ones, he believed, would simply reject this useful literature out of hand. Therefore, he adjusted the names of two authors in an attempt to facilitate the dissemination of their ideas. A page of advertisements inserted in the journal *Lisan al-Din* in the mid-1940s reveals the marketing maneuver: Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab became Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Dirʿi (from the oasis of Dirʿiyya, where he concluded an alliance with the house of Saʿud), and Ibn Taymiyya's name was shortened to al-Hafiz al-Harrani (after Harran, his native town in today's Turkey).[95] Arguably, such a deviation from conventional usage would not have made sense unless al-Hilali's intention was to mislead the public into believing that the two authors were obscure scholars rather than notorious ones. This deception does not seem to have bothered Muhammad ibn Ibrahim in Riyadh. Al-Hilali says that he mailed Ibn Ibrahim a copy of each book, and the Saudi scholar was reportedly pleased to know that they were being distributed in Morocco.[96]

A closer look at al-Hilali's own literary output also reveals how much emphasis he now placed on religious purism. In Chefchaouen, he wrote a major book that went through two reeditions over the years. At the request of his students who wanted to learn about true Islam, he dictated a compendium that was published under the title *Mukhtaṣar hadī al-khalīl fi-l-ʿaqāʾid wa ʿibādat al-jalīl*. For the most part, the book is a dry list of Salafi norms—a literary genre that Olivier Roy aptly labeled "dos and don'ts."[97] In it, al-Hilali describes the proper Salafi code of conduct: how and when to use the *siwāk* (the small stick that the Prophet used to clean his teeth), how and how not to place one's hands during prayer, what phrase to say when entering a home, and so on. Literalist interpretations abound. For example, he devotes a section to determining the amount of alms tax in gold dinars and silver dirhams that Muslims are expected to pay. Although these medieval currencies are mentioned in classical texts, in the mid-twentieth century they belonged to museums. He also specified that veiling was mandatory not only for a man's wives but also for his female slaves (*mā malakat al-yamīn min al-nisāʾ*).[98] This directive would have made more

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sense in precolonial Morocco, when official slavery had started to dwindle but was still extant.

On the question of theology, al-Hilali became quite outspoken in his hostility to everything but the Salafi creed. In stark contrast to al-Fasi, he condemned Ibn Tumart (d. 1130), the religious architect of the Almohad dynasty, for having brought Ashʿari theology to a previously orthodox Morocco. But despite their detestable creed, the Almohads won the respect of al-Hilali for their exemplary approach to Islamic law. Indeed, he lauded the Almohad caliph ʿAbd al-Muʾmin ibn ʿAli (d. 1163) for ordering all the compendiums of *fiqh* to be burnt, thus forcibly putting an end to *taqlīd* and to people's engrossment with traditional legal schools. A more subtle but no less instructive indication of al-Hilali's conception of Islamic law is that he celebrated the short-lived Zahiri school, which emerged in the ninth century. Though overly literalist at times, the Zahiris relied heavily on hadiths and advised Muslims against resorting to speculative hermeneutical methods in order to guess God's legal intentions. In short, their approach to Islamic law was largely compatible with what al-Hilali considered to be Salafi in the mid-twentieth century. He admired them because they had precluded blind imitation and relied on irrefutable proofs rather than the legal exertions of previous jurists. For him, the Zahiris (*ahl al-ẓāhir*) were no different from the people of hadith (*ahl al-ḥadīth*). With their legacy in mind, he suggested that all the particulars (*furūʿ*) of Islam should derive from hadiths rather than from traditional jurisprudence.[99]

However disturbing some of these views may have been to local Ashʿari and Maliki ʿulama, several prominent nationalists appear to have tolerated them. Al-Hilali was not a pariah. Among his closest associates between 1942 and 1947 were two scholars and anticolonial activists of relatively different backgrounds. The first was Muhammad al-Tanji (d. 1991), a native of Tetouan born in 1902. He was a product of the Qarawiyyin in Fes who later studied in Cairo, where he graduated from the faculty of *uṣūl al-dīn* at al-Azhar in 1931. When al-Hilali met him in Tetouan, he was a religious teacher who closely collaborated with al-Turris and the Party of National Reform.[100] The second was ʿAbdallah Gannun (d. 1989), one of the most luminary figures of twentieth-century Tangier. Although largely an autodidact, Gannun was first taught by his father, who had been a teacher at the Qarawiyyin and thus owned a large library. He then attended the lessons of scholars who happened to pass through Tangier—most notably al-Dukkali.

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Gannun introduced himself as a Salafi in creed, and as previously noted, he knew the technical meaning of that term. At the same time, he was a modernist in the tradition of ʿAbduh. When he was younger, Gannun had read the European classics translated in Lebanon and Egypt; Tolstoy, Hugo, Rousseau, Goethe, Montesquieu, and Shakespeare were among his favorites.[101] Al-Hilali first heard about him and his work in Berlin, but the two did not meet until 1942.[102] Like al-Tanji, Gannun was then involved in religious teaching and anticolonial activities.

Why did these individuals and other Moroccan nationalists tolerate al-Hilali's rigorist approach to Islam? There are many possible answers. First, al-Hilali was a well-educated religious man whose personal journey commanded authority. He had roamed the Islamic world to become a respected scholar and had either studied under or collaborated with major figures such as Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi, Rida, and Arslan. These were impressive references. Second, al-Hilali and his fellow Moroccan reformers were not diametrically opposed. They shared some of the same basic principles, such as the need to return to the scriptures, to rid society of the excesses of Sufism, and to overcome *taqlīd*. These common denominators made collaboration easier, even if some Moroccans thought that he was going too far. Third, al-Hilali remained a committed nationalist, albeit an Islamic one. His colleagues generally appreciated the fact that he opposed European colonialism and wanted to help Muslims overcome their weaknesses. In that context, he was more of a natural ally than a natural enemy. Likewise, he continued to respect nationalist activists who showed deference to Islam despite their alleged misunderstanding of true religion. No doubt he was growing more intolerant and more insistent on conformity to purist Salafism, but when push came to shove, he was still ready to collaborate.

There was also a fourth reason: al-Hilali may have been purist in many regards, but he was neither ignorant of the West nor intellectually opposed to modernity and progress. He was no obscurantist, and his European experience appears to have reassured or at least intrigued other Moroccan reformers. Even though to my knowledge al-Hilali and al-Fasi never met in the 1940s, they knew one another by reputation, and al-Fasi clearly admired the fact that al-Hilali had pursued graduate studies in Germany.[103] Nevertheless, it is true that al-Hilali was something of an enigma. His opponents often branded him a Wahhabi, yet he held a doctorate from the University of Berlin, was a polyglot, corresponded with eminent European

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scholars, dressed in suits and ties, and, interestingly, still refused to grow a beard.[104] This was confusing. When he wrote an article on the need to stone adulterers, his purist discourse and methodology shocked a rival scholar from Tangier, who, ironically, criticized him for being a Europeanized man (*rajul mutafarnij*).[105] Al-Hilali not only came from Germany and dressed like a European but also could articulate and defend purist views in a way that appealed to non-ʿulama. In a different article, he justified cutting off the hands of robbers on the basis of logic and social utilitarianism. The case of Saudi Arabia, he claimed, showed that the implementation of this canonical punishment was an effective deterrent. It was more efficient and more socially sound than European systems—plus it relieved the state from the burden of maintaining extra prisons and keeping an oversized corps of law enforcement officers.[106]

The multifaceted and somewhat ambivalent persona of al-Hilali comes across in the pages of *Lisan al-Din* (The language of religion), the journal that he founded in Tetouan in 1946. The title was a testimony to al-Hilali's liminal state of mind, for it was also an allusion to Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib (d. 1375), the historian and *homme de lettres* of Granada who exemplified the literary and cultural refinement of medieval al-Andalus.[107] Like al-Biruni, Ibn al-Khatib was not a model of purist Salafism, but he was a useful object of collective Muslim pride. As for the journal, it was al-Hilali's personal contribution to the field of monthly Islamic magazines. It followed the pattern previously established by Rida's *al-Manar*, al-Fiqi's *al-Islah*, and Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib's *al-Fath*. Al-Hilali's two closest associates, al-Tanji and Gannun, both collaborated on *Lisan al-Din* from its inception. Gannun's involvement was particularly important because he eventually took charge of the section on Qurʾanic exegesis and replaced al-Hilali as editor in chief in 1949.

Most of the journal's articles were written by al-Hilali himself and addressed technical issues of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. In keeping with his global outlook, he also went beyond Moroccan affairs. As *al-Manar* and *al-Fath* had done, *Lisan al-Din* informed its readers about the situation of Muslims in Holland, Indonesia, Yemen, and Pakistan. The identity of the journal's collaborators reflected al-Hilali's worldwide contacts. Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi, his favorite student from Lucknow, wrote exclusive articles on Islam in the Indian subcontinent. Abu al-Samh, who was still the chief imam of the holy mosque in Mecca, also wrote for *Lisan al-Din*.

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In addition, al-Hilali used his journal to spread positive and encouraging Western views of Islam. In this, he followed the example set by Arslan, who was known for unearthing the exploits of past Muslims in order to stir the pride of his readers and provide them with role models. Arslan had a penchant for historical topics that demonstrated Muslim superiority over the West: the early Muslim settlements in the Alps and the south of France, Saladin's triumph over the Crusaders in Jerusalem, and, above all, the grandeur of al-Andalus in the medieval period. But he also had an obvious appreciation of translated books in which Western scholars admitted to the achievements of Muslims. Al-Hilali adopted a similar approach and even addressed some of the same topics. In *Lisan al-Din*, he published translated sections of European works from Massignon's *L'Islam et l'occident* (which he found in another Arabic journal) to George McCabe's *Splendor of Moorish Spain* (which he translated himself).[108] As a token of his respect for Western academia, al-Hilali sent copies of the journal to various European Orientalists, including Kahle in London and Gibb in Oxford. The latter sent back a thank-you note, which al-Hilali proudly published along with a short laudatory introduction of the man and his work.[109]

But in 1947, just as the Moroccan anticolonial struggle was entering its most critical phase, al-Hilali decided once again to leave the country for the Arab East, as he had done in 1922. The reasons that motivated his departure are not clear, but he later wrote that he wished to reunite with his first wife in Iraq.[110] Nevertheless, he continued to read *Lisan al-Din* and to submit texts for publication until the periodical disappeared in the early 1950s. One of his last contributions to the journal was in fact a forceful statement of his purist religious ethos. It was a reply to an article published in *Lisan al-Din* in 1952 about women's rights. The article had disturbed al-Hilali because it argued that nothing in Islam prevents women from becoming actively involved in society and politics as long as they are veiled. The text was not signed, but he presumed that the author was his good friend Gannun.

In his reply, al-Hilali explained that Gannun—or whoever the author was—had reached his conclusion by means of an illegitimate analogy (*qiyās*) that was based on a jurisprudential opinion rather than on a primary source. Al-Hilali was too much of a scripturalist to accept such a methodology; one had to rely solely on the Qurʾan and the Sunna. These canonical texts, he argued, proved that women were created to manage their households and serve their husbands. Therefore, to prevent a woman

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from marrying so that she could run for public office would amount to disobeying God. He buttressed his argument by stating the famous hadith according to which a people that placed a woman in charge of its affairs would never prosper. He made no attempt to either reconsider its validity or reinterpret its meaning from a modernist perspective. Rather, he sealed the debate with an antisyncretistic argument: the electoral principle to which Gannun had referred in his article was un-Islamic to begin with. It was, therefore, irrelevant to ask whether or not women should be allowed to run for office. Muslims, he wrote, must clamor that Islam is not democratic, communist, or socialist. It is an independent system.[111]

Al-Hilali was in Iraq when he wrote these lines, and there, too, he continued to expound very purist views. To say that he renounced reason or that he rejected progress and modernity would be a mischaracterization, though there is no denying that his understanding of all these categories was at odds with that of al-Fasi and others. Al-Hilali continued to cultivate his ties to the West as well. He returned to the University of Bonn in 1953 as a visiting professor and remained in contact with Kahle, whom he joined in Oxford in August 1954 to translate yet another Arabic manuscript.[112] His religious discourse was changing, but his personal and social identity nonetheless remained complex. During the era of decolonization and independence, however, his shift toward greater religious purism became even more pronounced. With the success of nationalist and anti-imperialist movements all over the Middle East and North Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, his willingness to tolerate religious diversity declined substantially. Many other purist Salafis experienced this transition in the same way.

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5
Searching for a Raison d'Être in the Postindependence Era

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Decolonization in the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere in the Muslim world not only redefined the social and political conditions of many states but also affected Islamic thought in a profound way. With the military coups and the rise of the Baʿth Party in Syria, the popularity of the Nasser regime in Egypt, the triumph of Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia, and the victory of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in Algeria, the first years of the postindependence era saw the coming of mass secular nationalism and ambitious plans for modernization based on socialist and capitalist models. Clearly, the most appealing intellectual trends of that period were not of Islamic inspiration. Even in Morocco, where Islam was intertwined with the nationalist movement, modernist Salafis struggled to ensure the implementation of their ideals after independence.

Indeed, the exponents of modernist Salafism who lived through these changes often bowed to the new context, either because they were willing to work within the new state system or because they lacked the organizational framework to oppose it. In Morocco, they became politically domesticated—a situation that limited their ability to embody the spirit of progressive sociopolitical reform. They became state employees and government officials, while the Palace coopted key aspects of their discourse. Ultimately, the notion of modernist Salafism became increasingly

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marginal, just as did its main articulators. This is not to say that modernist voices disappeared altogether in Arab societies, but they were in the minority during the 1950s and 1960s. The more prominent Islamic activists of the time, including Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966), often buried the legacy of balanced reform under anti-Western rhetoric and politically radical ideas.

The marginalization of purist Salafis was different. True, the new elites and decision makers of postcolonial states perceived them as being out of touch with the social and political realities of the time. In that sense, purist Salafis were hardly worthy of attention. But the passing of the colonial era did not affect their activities and social relevance in the same way. Unlike the situation of the modernist Salafis of Morocco, the purist Salafis' inability to shape, control, or challenge the political field after independence did not accelerate their demise. Although they occasionally made recommendations on matters of proper Islamic governance, their main concern was still to call people to orthodoxy and orthopraxy. In the 1950s and 1960s, purist Salafis were generally too quietist to present themselves as religious agents of political change or to harbor ambitions similar to those of modernist Salafis (or to those of Islamists, for that matter). Therefore, the advent of independence had less of an impact on them, and their goals and aspirations remained virtually unchanged: they continued to work toward the purification and standardization of Islam.

To be sure, purist Salafis identified new targets for religious condemnation, but the leaders of postcolonial states were not usually among them. In Egypt, it is noteworthy that Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi and members of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya showed as much loyalty to Nasser as they did to King Faruq—two leaders who never embraced the cause of Islamic purism. When al-Fiqi met with General Neguib in the summer of 1952, he hailed the Free Officers as heroes who, in addition to purifying Egypt from British influence, would bring about the restoration of true Islam.[1] This was wishful thinking. The leaders of Ansar al-Sunna urged the new military government to take Saudi Arabia as its model for religious reform, but in the following years, they never critiqued the regime as a whole for its secular worldview. Rather, they preferred to reinterpret Egyptian politics in religious terms, regardless of the accuracy of such assessments. To them, for example, Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal represented a victory for Islam, even though this was not at all how the president framed the issue. They also defended the National Charter

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of 1962 as a document that extolled the spirit of religion, even though it enshrined the notion of Arab socialism, relegated Islam to a marginal position, and aroused the ire of many Islamic activists both inside and outside the country.[2] Instead of venturing into the political field, purist Salafis in Egypt turned their attention to insidious neocolonial threats ranging from the growing acceptance of feminism to the popularity of Coca-Cola and other soft drinks, which they branded as wicked American beverages containing unlawful, drug-like substances.[3]

Above all, purist Salafis everywhere maintained their relentless assault on the three religious innovations they considered most dangerous: theological errors, legal partisanship, and Sufism. But because the promotion of Islamic nationalism lost its urgency in the wake of decolonization, purist Salafis had less incentive to act with restraint. Throughout the twentieth century, the struggle against imperialism had been a rallying cry: it had often encouraged modernist and purist activists to overlook their differences for the greater good of the *umma*. The end of this struggle removed a common goal that, until then, had counteracted centrifugal forces. What higher purpose could now motivate a self-respecting purist Salafi to overlook someone's departure from true Islam? Why keep tolerating misguided Muslim allies now that the colonial powers had retreated? Independence thus prompted purist Salafis to rethink the relationship between religious unity and religious purity. In the process, they further narrowed the range of what was considered to be religiously acceptable.

A booklet originally published in Morocco in 1962 with the assistance of Taqi al-Din al-Hilali points to this change in attitude. Its author, the Egyptian ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Wakil (d. 1970), who three years later would become the leader of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya, insisted that calling for a return to the Qurʾan and the Sunna, although necessary, was not sufficient to make someone a Salafi. All so-called Muslims referred back to the scriptures, he explained—even the most infamous heretics in Islamic history did it. What made a Salafi a Salafi was instead the ability to provide evidence from the Qurʾan and the Sunna in both creed and law.[4] Al-Wakil glossed over the issue of textual interpretation, but his basic message was clear: Salafism could not be reduced to its scripturalist dimension, because not all scripture-based arguments were valid. Although this idea was not new, its unreserved expression was indicative of a new phase in the struggle over religious truth and the definition of Salafi identity. Gone

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were the days when one could simply assert, as a leading member of the Algerian Association of Muslim 'Ulama did in 1933, that "it is well known that the books of Sunna and hadith make their reader a Sunni Salafi."[5] In the postindependence period, purist Salafis were held to much higher and much more specific standards of religious correctness. They showed even less flexibility than before, and they became less willing to ignore minor doctrinal and legal divergences of opinion. As a result, even intra-Salafi disputes, which already existed but did not usually lead to crises, became more bitter and more public.

Two telling examples involve al-Fiqi, who found himself at the center of controversy in the mid-1950s. The first attack came from Muhammad Sultan al-Maʿsumi al-Khujandi (d. 1961), another Salafi globe-trotter and polyglot, now perhaps best known for his advocacy of anti-*madhhab*ism. Born in today's Tajikistan in 1880, al-Khujandi had been teaching in the Hijaz since 1935, most notably at Dar al-Hadith in Mecca—the school founded by ʿAbd al-Zahir Abu al-Samh in 1933. At the root of the dispute was an article that al-Fiqi had published in Egypt in 1949 in which he claimed that angels were not endowed with reason (*ʿaql*). A literal reading of the scriptures had led al-Fiqi to believe that this was the correct interpretation. Given that clear textual proof attesting to the rational character of angels was absent and given that angels could not be compared to human beings, it followed (or so al-Fiqi asserted) that angels should not be deemed rational.

Al-Khujandi was appalled by the boldness of these views, which, in his opinion, denigrated angels and left Islam exposed to the criticism of freethinkers and atheists. How could one consider angels to be mindless when the Qurʾan describes them performing crucial tasks on behalf of God? After reading the piece, al-Khujandi conferred with ʿAbdallah ibn Hasan, who was still chief *qāḍī* of the Hijaz at the time, and decided to mail a rebuttal to al-Fiqi following the principle of sincere, private advice (*naṣīḥa*). Having received no answer, he confronted al-Fiqi in person when the latter traveled to Saudi Arabia in the summer of 1949 (as he regularly did, not only for the pilgrimage but also to visit Saudi political and religious authorities). According to al-Khujandi, al-Fiqi denied ever having received the letter but explained his position, admitting that he had made a mistake and vowing to publish a rectification. But he never fulfilled his promise. At the suggestion of Ibn Hasan, al-Khujandi then published a condensed

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version of his rebuttal in a Saudi journal, thereby bringing the dispute into the open. From there, the debate devolved into a larger conflict between religious scholars from two rival camps. It culminated in the mid-1950s with the publication of a book in which al-Khujandi settled his old score with al-Fiqi. Among other points, al-Khujandi invoked the authority of Ibn Taymiyya to challenge al-Fiqi, not only questioning the latter's state of mind but also casting doubt on his scholarly integrity by accusing him of plagiarism.[6]

In Cairo, a copy of this book reached the Egyptian Salafi Ahmad Muhammad Shakir (d. 1958), who also happened to be embroiled in a personal conflict with al-Fiqi. Shakir, an eminent religious scholar and former judge, was well connected to reformist circles and often contributed to al-Fiqi's journal *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*. The two men were longtime friends and associates, but their relationship changed in 1955 when Shakir stumbled upon an article in which al-Fiqi appeared to contradict Ibn Taymiyya. The article discussed a fatwa in which Ibn Taymiyya claimed that the existence of the jinn could be attested to not only by the Qurʾan and the Sunna but also by countless credible reports of witnesses who claimed to have seen and interacted with these creatures. Ibn Taymiyya even added that it would take a long time to recount his and his associates' own encounters with the jinn. Commenting on this passage, al-Fiqi wrote that there was no proof of the veracity of those reports and suggested that perhaps the alleged witnesses were delusional or had imagined things.

For Shakir, such a statement amounted to accusing Ibn Taymiyya of being a liar, and this was a line that could not be crossed with impunity. He quickly wrote a rebuttal and sent it to al-Fiqi for publication. When it failed to appear in the pages of *al-Hadi al-Nabawi*, Shakir tried repeatedly to reach his friend on the telephone, only to realize that al-Fiqi was avoiding him. It was not until the two met by accident in a scholarly gathering that Shakir had a chance to broach the subject. Al-Fiqi quickly became irritated. How could anyone accuse him of disrespecting Ibn Taymiyya when he had devoted most of his life to spreading the shaykh's teachings and was a pioneer in the rediscovery of his work? Driven, it seems, by a misplaced sense of ownership and precedence, al-Fiqi reportedly told Shakir: "Ibn Taymiyya is mine before being yours."[7] Soon after, when Shakir came across al-Khujandi's book, he understood that his old friend would never

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budge and would never acknowledge, let alone publish, any rebuttal. Therefore, Shakir found an editor and released a detailed account of their dispute, including a full critique of al-Fiqi's controversial statement. But Shakir did not stop there. He also took jabs at the character of his former associate by denouncing his hubris and "scholarly tyranny" in addition to portraying him as paranoid.[8]

What these two examples suggest is that purist Salafis now had the luxury of being more ardent in expressing their convictions, even if it caused dissension within their ranks. The waning of colonialism from the late 1940s onward helped accelerate this swing toward greater religious purity, thereby forcing purist Salafis to delve into finer points of theology and elucidate grey areas of Salafism—a process that, in turn, exacerbated competition and rivalries. At this level of detail, it was not always clear what the purest understanding of Islam should be, and scholars could rely only on their talent, reputation, and influence within Salafi networks to convince others. Al-Fiqi, for one, had good reason to believe that the most orthodox reading of the scriptures was to deny the rationality of angels. That his natural allies in Saudi Arabia opposed him so openly and persistently meant that his ability to shape the contours of Salafi Islam was more limited than he thought.

No less indicative of the growth of intra-Salafi disputes in the postindependence period is the struggle over Ibn Taymiyya's legacy. Al-Fiqi, for example, did not deny the centrality of this medieval scholar to the formation of Salafi identity. As he wrote in a self-justification published right before Shakir released his tell-all book: "One of the most important instructions I give to my brothers of Ansar al-Sunna [is] that whoever is not versed in the books of the two shaykhs [Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya] cannot be a Salafi in the true sense."[9] But how exactly were Salafis supposed to interpret the dense and complex writings of these two authorities? And to what extent should one rely on fourteenth-century scholars, however brilliant, to define the substance of the pure Islam of the pious ancestors? Was this not a new form of blind imitation? Al-Fiqi, it seems, believed that adopting an anti-*taqlīd* attitude was safer and more becoming of a purist Salafi than having an unconditional admiration for Ibn Taymiyya. Defending himself against Shakir's accusation, al-Fiqi argued that, although he did not accuse this revered medieval scholar of being a liar, he did not consider him to be infallible either: "I do not blindly

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follow Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim or anyone else, and I do not take them as lords instead of God; on the contrary, the ʿulama are, to me, humans who sometimes err and sometimes acquire knowledge."[10]

These were the types of issues purist Salafis now needed to work out. Outside of Salafi circles, however, few people had interest in such abstract questions. Even the Islamists affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood focused on more practical concerns. Still, the religious and often metaphysical nature of the purist Salafis' preoccupations proved to be an advantage in the long run. Generally speaking, the role these Salafis played as Islamic activists was not embedded in a particular national or political context. Because their primary concern was to define and propagate orthodoxy and orthopraxy, regardless of local considerations, their fate was not closely tied to any one country. Emigration to another part of the *umma* always remained a viable option for them. Many of these purist Salafis, after all, had been exponents of Islamic nationalism during the colonial period. In the context of their growing marginalization, they could choose to move elsewhere without fear of betraying their cause or fading into oblivion. By contrast, the modernist Salafis of Morocco, who were territorial-statist nationalists, had social and political objectives that did not allow them to enjoy the same degree of mobility. Their destiny as Muslim reformers was more closely linked to the nation they had fought to free from colonial rule.[11]

The story of al-Hilali during the 1950s and 1960s illustrates these developments. Far more quietist than political activist, he felt ill at ease in independent Morocco. He did not relate to the politics of the Istiqlal, the leading nationalist party, and its socialist offshoot, the Union Nationale des Forces Populaires (UNFP). Nor could he make sense of most state policies regarding religion, though he never criticized the monarchy. In particular, he disliked the prevalence of an official Moroccan Islam, which he did not consider sufficiently orthodox. So while the Moroccan state was able to grant *some* of the modernist Salafis' wishes, it could not fulfill al-Hilali's demands for a purist interpretation of Islam. Increasingly frustrated and marginalized, he accepted an invitation to return to Saudi Arabia—an environment where the religious orientation better corresponded to his own and where he could feel more comfortable and useful. As we will see, al-Hilali's story is not unique. In different parts of the Muslim world, other purist Salafis like him went through a similar transition.

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Religion and Politics

In 1957, a year after Morocco gained independence and a year before the fall of the Iraqi monarchy, al-Hilali made a short trip from Baghdad back to his native country. For the first time in thirty-five years, he was able to return to the former French zone of Morocco. When a reporter from the foremost state-sponsored religious magazine met him in Rabat for an interview, the reporter described al-Hilali as a man who was neither severe nor arrogant:

> I came to see Dr. Taqi al-Din al-Hilali in his room at the Royal Hotel. I found myself in front of an individual who is modest in his manners, speech, and movements, and simple in his external appearance. He greets you and welcomes you warmly; he immediately makes you feel as though he knew you from before, and prompts you to drop your ceremonial manners, to talk without formality, and to enjoy complete freedom. [You want] to fully open your heart to this man who speaks to you with his heart before speaking to you with his tongue. This is Dr. Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, the great scholar and globe-trotter with a big heart.[12]

Al-Hilali was evidently an affable man as long as he did not sense enmity, but he knew how to be harsh and destroy the reputation of an opponent when necessary.[13] Similarly, he was not uncompromising in all matters. Like most purist Salafis, he had become inflexible with respect to religion but proved more lenient when it came to politics. Overall he considered obedience and stability more important than a Muslim ruler's degree of religious virtue. If providing sound advice to leaders was appropriate if done in a private manner, confrontations and revolutions had to be avoided. Yet quietism alone fails to convey al-Hilali's attitude toward politics. As Olivier Roy astutely remarked, many purist Salafis are notable not only for their reluctance to become involved in active politics but also for their lack of interest in political science.[14] This observation applies to al-Hilali, at least in the 1950s and 1960s. In contrast to Islamists and modernist Salafis, he did not delve into political thought. After independence, ʿAllal al-Fasi reexamined various notions of governance—democracy, republicanism, and constitutional monarchism—from an Islamic perspective, but no comparable investigation can be found in al-Hilali's corpus.[15]

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He showed no sustained desire to rethink the relationship between Islam and the state in the modern age. In his writings, he usually restricted his comments to praising or criticizing certain rulers based on the Islamic character of their politics, or lack thereof.

But the criteria al-Hilali used do not appear to have always been consistent. Whereas he disparaged Sharif Husayn, supposedly because heresy (*shirk*) prevailed in Mecca under his rule, al-Hilali claims to have always expressed his allegiance to Sharif Husayn's grandson, King Faysal II of Iraq, when delivering Friday sermons in that country.[16] It is not clear why one ruler deserved more religious respect than the other. Perhaps al-Hilali disliked Sharif Husayn because of the latter's political maneuverings and staunch opposition to the Saudis, whereas Faysal II had no axe to grind against the Salafis and was even willing to normalize Iraq's relationship with Saudi Arabia. But there is no way of confirming these suspicions. In any case, al-Hilali's views on politics were probably less principled and more self-serving than he was willing to admit. In Afghanistan in 1933, he allegedly refused to visit King Nadir Shah (despite the latter's efforts at reversing the Westernizing policies of his predecessor, King Amanullah) because of rumors about his cold reception of Arab visitors. Nevertheless, al-Hilali praised and defended King Saʿud of Saudi Arabia despite worse rumors about his lavish lifestyle and questionable piety.[17]

What is certain is that al-Hilali favored monarchical regimes. When he returned to Baghdad after his short trip to Rabat in late 1957, he did not suspect that the days of the Hashemite kingdom of Iraq were numbered. In July 1958, a group of Free Officers modeled after the Egyptian example overthrew the regime. King Faysal II and part of his family were executed, and one of the revolutionary officers, ʿAbd al-Karim Qasim (d. 1963), established a military dictatorship that professed Iraqi nationalism and treated religion and religious identity as issues of lesser importance. The new republic focused on agrarian reform and sought to reduce the country's dependence on Western politics and economy.

For al-Hilali, this revolution was a step backward, one that ushered in political instability and compromised the prosperity that, according to him, the Hashemite monarchy had been able to offer. He did not merely criticize the way in which domestic reforms were carried out and their disappointing results; he also opposed the entire rationale behind the revolution and denied the existence of sociopolitical tensions that had preceded

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it. He remained oblivious to the fact that Iraqi prosperity during the 1950s was uneven, leaving over half of the country's privately owned land in the hands of nearly 1 percent of the population. He was equally insensitive to the fact that the revolution was, in some respects, a rural one.[18] The question of the redistribution of land was irrelevant to him—and certainly not worth a coup d'état. Like the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia, al-Hilali regarded all forms of socialism and modern social engineering as contrary to the will of God:

> [Islam] did not hinder competent individuals, but rather left them free to use their talents and acquire material goods through legitimate means. There is no remedy to the ignorance of someone who wants to make [all] people equal. In the Sura *The Bees*, God said: "God privileged some of you over others in sustenance [*rizq*]." . . . The difference in talent necessarily and absolutely entails disparity in possessions. The remedy [to that disparity] is [the Muslim's] obligation [to provide] alms tax, interest-free loans, and expiatory gifts [*kaffārāt*], as well as [Islam's] incitation to charity [*ṣadaqāt*].[19]

Al-Hilali not only criticized the Iraqi revolution for being religiously unwarranted but also branded it as regressive because it occurred at the expense of religion. In particular, the new regime's decision to free communist activists who had been jailed under the monarchy infuriated him. As soon as Qasim gave them free rein, al-Hilali complained, these atheists violently opposed all practicing Muslims.[20] Al-Hilali was no less contemptuous toward the Iraqi Baʿth Party and its Arab nationalist discourse. He argued that no serious Muslim could ever consider following a movement whose éminence grise was a Christian—namely, Michel ʿAflaq (d. 1989). However, despite his repugnance for the revolution and its aftermath, al-Hilali claims he did not protest openly. In his Friday sermons, he chose to ignore political issues altogether and refused to speak about Qasim's government in either good or bad terms. When some of his students opted for a more confrontational approach and began criticizing the Free Officers in mosques, he supposedly forbade them to do so for fear that repression would disrupt religious life. He was far more comfortable raising money for the Algerians, who still struggled against French colonialism.[21]

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By then, al-Hilali had been a professor of Arabic literature and Qurʾanic and hadith studies at the University of Baghdad for ten years.[22] Besides his official duties, he gave lessons in the city's mosques several times a week and tirelessly condemned the prevalence of the Ashʿari creed and the population's attachment to the Hanafi school of law as well as Sufism and Shiʿism. Although he continued to visit India and Saudi Arabia almost every year during that period, Iraq had become his home. Prior to 1958, he had never considered moving back to Morocco. But the Iraqi revolution and the new political context worried him enough that he decided to leave.[23] Using a medical pretext, he fled to Bonn, West Germany, in 1959. From there, he returned to his native country.

Incidentally, al-Hilali rejected the new Iraqi regime even though he had a personal relationship with one of its top revolutionary officers. ʿAbd al-Salam ʿArif (d. 1966), the assistant commander in chief and deputy prime minister under Qasim (until the latter demoted and imprisoned him), was a former student of al-Hilali. ʿArif later became the head of state after the coup d'état of 1963. Al-Hilali said that he was "among our most special Salafi brothers."[24] Indeed, ʿArif was known for having little interest in the principles of the Baʿth Party other than Arab nationalism. According to historian Majid Khadduri, he was averse to socialism because of his attachment to "traditional Islam."[25] At one point after February 1963, he wrote to al-Hilali in Morocco and asked him to come back to Baghdad. The revolutionary government of Iraq, he claimed, was now trying to apply true Islamic precepts. But al-Hilali did not change his mind or try to use his political connections to further the cause of purist Salafism. In his memoirs, he explains that he thanked ʿArif for his offer but refused to return to Baghdad because he did not think that the revolutionary regime would succeed.

Back in Morocco as an Apolitical and Marginal Salafi

In 1957, al-Hilali had taken advantage of his trip to Rabat to submit two texts to the kingdom's new official Islamic journal, *Daʿwat al-Haqq* (The call to truth). The first was an article in which he offered a purely religious reading of the independence movement and its aftermath. Ignoring

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international, political, and social factors, he suggested that Islam was the only driving force behind the Moroccan triumph over colonialism. God granted victory to the Moroccan *mujāhidīn* because they believed in Him and obeyed Him. Yet complete devotion to Islam was no less essential now that colonial forces were gone, he maintained. No worldly success could be achieved without adhering to a strict conception of God's unicity. The acknowledgment of God's lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*) required any Muslim to worship Him accordingly. Therefore, Muslims needed to shrink from all thoughts and actions that might be construed as calling God's divinity and omnipotence into question (*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*).[26] Simply put, al-Hilali summed up his vision for independent Morocco in the rigorous conception of monotheism that had come to characterize purist Salafis.

The second text he published resulted from a twenty-minute audience that King Muhammad V granted him at the royal palace in 1957. Their conversation was cordial and rather informal: it revolved around al-Hilali's travels outside of Morocco. Soon after this short meeting, al-Hilali wrote an ode in which he praised the king for his religious qualities and anticolonial achievements.[27] Together, this poem and the aforementioned article encapsulate the main themes and attitudes that characterized al-Hilali's Islamic activism in postindependence Morocco. First, he eschewed politics, in part because he had never formulated specific political objectives beyond the termination of the French and Spanish protectorates. After Muhammad V passed away, al-Hilali also flattered Hasan II and never admonished, criticized, or opposed the new king in writing. Second, he continued to push for a type of Islamic purism that stood out in the Moroccan context. Without a major foreign colonial power to oppose, he could no longer link his purist convictions to a broader campaign for Islamic emancipation, as he had done in the past.

Upon his relocation to Morocco in 1959, al-Hilali wandered for some time and finally settled in Fes. There he stayed in the house of his former professor Muhammad ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi. The man who had supposedly converted him to Salafism in 1921 was now nearly eighty years old and, according to al-Hilali, overwhelmed with hopelessness. When al-Hilali informed him of his desire to keep calling Moroccans to true Islam, the old religious scholar advised him not to waste his time. Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi reportedly confessed that any further attempt at proselytism was doomed to fail, for he himself had never been able to achieve significant results

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despite prolonged efforts. Posing as the champion of Salafi missionary work, al-Hilali allegedly replied that, for his part, he had called to God in various regions of the world and had always succeeded beyond expectations. He was confident he would succeed once again.[28]

Although al-Hilali likely gave the story a self-congratulatory tone when he retold it in the 1970s, it remains that Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi did experience disappointments in late 1959 and early 1960. But the reasons had more to do with politics than religious proselytism. Unlike his globe-trotting pupil, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi devoted most of his life to the Moroccan cause. For him, independence was the end result of a long and often personal struggle for the comprehensive renaissance of the Moroccan people. He rejoiced at the return of Muhammad V from exile, and like other modernist Salafis, he believed that independent Morocco would be built on the same progressive Islamic values that had animated the nationalist movement for decades. However, it did not take long before Moroccan religious activists realized that neither they nor their ideals would play a major part in shaping the new state.[29] The secular and Westernized elite gained the upper hand, and the monarchy succeeded in dominating the ʿulama and reducing their influence.

It so happened that al-Hilali visited his old professor just when the latter was growing disillusioned. A political activist, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi had just suffered a number of setbacks and had few reasons to celebrate Moroccan independence. Although he was initially ignored for a few months and received no ministerial position in the first postcolonial government, he was later chosen to become one of the three elder members of the Crown Council (*majlis al-tāj*), a senate-like chamber created in 1956 to prepare the country for representative government.[30] Concerned with social justice, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi was apprehensive of the growth of the bourgeoisie and the monarchy's alliance with rural landowners. He reacted by collaborating with the UNFP, the leftist offshoot of the Istiqlal Party created in early 1959. In December of that year, however, the authorities discovered a plot against Crown Prince Hasan, which prompted the Palace to crack down on certain militants of the UNFP (whose radical wing was suspected of wrongdoing) and the politically inconvenient members of the former Army of National Liberation. The monarchy's decision to use repressive actions to consolidate power caused great concern among progressives. In 1960, when Muhammad V dismissed the government of ʿAbdallah Ibrahim

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(also a member of the UNFP) and appointed a new one under royal leadership, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi lost confidence in the postindependence governing process and resigned from the Crown Council.[31]

In terms of his approach to politics, then, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi was diametrically opposed to al-Hilali. The old activist remained faithful to the sociopolitical dimensions of balanced reform. Until his death in 1964, he continued to support the UNFP and its socialist policies. Some photos dating from 1962 show him at the party's second congress, sitting on a tribune next to ʿAbd al-Rahim Bouabid, who cofounded the UNFP with Mehdi Ben Barka. Wearing white traditional clothes, the old shaykh's appearance stands in sharp contrast to the younger, secular activists in suits and ties who surround him.[32] Despite their diverging approaches to religion and the generational gap between them, though, they acted together to actualize the sociopolitical ideals of the anticolonial struggle.

Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi's commitment to progressive politics was undeniable: in 1962, he further distinguished himself by joining the campaign in opposition to Morocco's first constitution. The crisis unfolded when Hasan II, who acceded to the throne in 1961, chose to bypass the consultative council that his father had set up and instead asked French constitutional jurists to draft the 1962 constitution. The document was largely foreign in its origins, and some of its key articles worried those who either feared the erosion of parliamentary democracy or objected to granting unprecedented powers to the king. Inspired by the modernist principles of Islamic reform, Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi refused to condone what he saw as authoritarian provisions and, along with the leaders of the UNFP, chose to boycott the national process of popular ratification by referendum.[33] For al-Hilali, this kind of political opposition was unthinkable because it encouraged instability that might weaken a ruler who, though he may not have been perfect, had declared his attachment to Islam. Al-Hilali thus took no part in the debate, and it is not even clear what he thought of the constitution.

Not all modernist Salafis joined the opposition campaign. Al-Fasi, for one, approved of the 1962 constitution. Still, it must be noted that unlike al-Hilali many Islamic reformers in Morocco adopted a proactive attitude toward politics after independence. Al-Fasi may not have agreed with Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi about the constitution, but he nonetheless embraced the political sphere wholeheartedly. Politics was at the heart of al-Fasi's achievements ever since the colonial period, from his involvement in

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founding political parties to his redaction of key manifestos. When he returned from exile in August 1956, he became president of the Istiqlal Party, over which he had exercised much control while abroad. As a logical extension of his work against French colonialism, he seized every opportunity that independent Morocco offered him, from presiding over commissions to accepting a position as minister. His work in party politics forced him, of course, to address a wide array of sociopolitical issues. Besides his active support for the annexation of Western Sahara, he dealt with questions of agricultural production, unemployment, industrialization, democracy, and human rights.

There was a price to pay for this level of political involvement, however. Like any politician, al-Fasi sometimes had to adopt a tactical approach so that some of his ideas might have a chance to prevail. One example is the role he played in elaborating the Moroccan code of personal status, the Mudawwana. Al-Fasi was head of the ten-member commission that hastily restructured and codified Maliki jurisprudence in 1957 and 1958. (The group also included Ibn al-ʿArabi al-ʿAlawi and Mukhtar al-Susi, another self-proclaimed Salafi.) Political scientist Malika Zeghal has shown how al-Fasi departed from his modernist ideals and contradicted his previous declarations when he failed to enshrine limitations on polygamy.[34] In a context of growing competition between religious nationalists and secular elites, even within the Istiqlal, it appears that al-Fasi and other modernist Salafis preferred to act quickly and imperfectly to secure any political gain. Al-Fasi was aware that some Westernized Moroccans within the government were using their influential positions to restrict the jurisdiction of *sharīʿa* courts. He agreed that Islamic law needed to be adjusted to modern conditions in order to rival the appeal of foreign legal codes,[35] but there was no time for such an ambitious plan. Settling on an expedient compromise seemed wiser given the circumstances. The priority was to ensure that Islamic law would at least prevail in matters of personal status.

Such political opportunism was precisely what purist Salafis were trying to avoid. This does not mean that al-Hilali envisioned religion and politics as separate spheres. On the contrary, he affirmed that one could not differentiate the two because the Qurʾan and the Sunna are filled with politically relevant passages.[36] Yet he did not believe that it was the role of the ʿulama to participate in the governing process. As guardians of orthodoxy

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and orthopraxy, their role instead consisted in providing religious guidance, not in diluting pure Islam for short-term political gains. Indeed, al-Hilali must have felt the Mudawwana to be an aberration, though I have found no evidence that he decried it. Highly critical of any attachment to a school of Islamic law, he was known for denying the authority of the Maliki *madhhab* despite its centrality to Morocco's religious identity and heritage. Unlike many modernist Salafis, al-Hilali did not seek the "Moroccanization" of the legal system; his sole concern was to make sure that the law was truly in accordance with God's will and the Sunna of His Prophet. For al-Hilali, nationalism could by no means warrant any kind of Moroccan exception or distinction with respect to religion. True Islam was unique and transnational. In the late 1950s, no reason could justify the elaboration of a specifically Moroccan set of Islamic rules, beliefs, and practices.

Discomfort in Meknes and Rabat

Although it is true that some of Morocco's modernist Salafis never engaged in active politics, the vast majority of them chose to join the new state structure in one capacity or another, as we shall see at the end of this chapter. Al-Hilali's situation was slightly different. He did not occupy positions as steady or as prestigious as those of his modernist counterparts, who had earned solid reputations as Moroccan nationalists during colonial times. But thanks to his connections and qualifications, he still managed to find work. Between 1959 and 1968, he served as a state-appointed preacher, a university professor, and a writer in Morocco's official Islamic magazine, *Daʿwat al-Haqq*. However, this period in his life was marked by frustration, partly because of his own religious grievances but also because of the embarrassment he often caused the authorities. Overall he was something of a misfit in independent Morocco.

In Fes, al-Hilali set out to do what he had been doing for some time—namely, calling people to purist Salafism. Once again, he started giving lessons in a local mosque and claimed to have succeeded in attracting an impressive crowd in less than a week. Among those who came to listen to him was Makki Baddu from the Ministry of Habous, or religious endowments.[37] At the end of one evening lesson, Baddu came forward, introduced himself, allegedly praised al-Hilali for his work, and invited him to his

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office in Rabat. There Baddu offered al-Hilali a position as state-appointed preacher (*wāʿiẓ*) for 200 dirhams a month, about twice the normal salary. This amount did not live up to al-Hilali's expectations—he thought he deserved more—but he nonetheless accepted the offer. Instead of relocating to the capital, where he was expected to work, he chose to travel back and forth between Fes and Rabat, fearing that the humid climate of the coast might dramatically worsen his asthma problems. After a few months of commuting, however, he decided to resettle in the city of Meknes, located some sixty kilometers west of Fes and, therefore, closer to Rabat. Whenever possible, he also toured the country to preach in smaller cities and villages, especially in his native Tafilalt region.[38]

The ministry's decision to hire al-Hilali made a good deal of sense. At the time, Morocco could not count on many religious scholars with as much instruction and experience in preaching. There was an urgent need for individuals like al-Hilali. In 1956, al-Fasi had complained about the poor quality of religious teaching in the country's mosques and about the inability of preachers to attract a substantial audience.[39] But Moroccan authorities may not have suspected that al-Hilali would stir controversy. He did not grow soft-spoken with age. Not long after he moved to Meknes, he started angering fellow citizens with his lessons, which emphasized a strict definition of *tawḥīd*, disputed the validity of the Maliki school of law, and condemned Sufism and Sufi festivals (*mawāsim*). The governor of Meknes, along with other members of the local religious elite, allegedly convinced hundreds of people to sign a petition against al-Hilali, denouncing his attacks on Moroccan religious traditions. They sent it to the Ministry of Habous and requested that al-Hilali be fired.[40]

The controversy was serious enough that the ministry set up a commission to assess the situation. Fortunately for al-Hilali, the commission was under the supervision of his good friend and former collaborator ʿAbdallah Gannun, who secured his exoneration. A few influential people also showed their support for al-Hilali. Among them was his other friend from the 1940s, Muhammad al-Tanji, who now lived in Rabat and also worked for the Ministry of Habous as director of the Office of Preaching and Guidance (*al-waʿẓ wa-l-irshād*). Another was Ahmad Bargash, who later became Minister of Habous and Islamic Affairs from 1963 to 1972. Al-Hilali does not say under what circumstances he and Bargash met, but they seem to have been on good terms during al-Hilali's entire stay in Meknes.[41]

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Several other controversies occurred in Meknes during the 1960s, and each time al-Hilali alleged that he was the victim of conspiracies against him. Because he believed he was preaching the truth, he automatically held his opponents responsible for any trouble his sermons caused.

Here, it must be noted that our knowledge of these local and small-scale conflicts comes exclusively from al-Hilali's recollections. Although I have found no documentary evidence to corroborate his stories and although he may well have exaggerated their magnitude, they are likely to be true. That local Muslims took offense at his purist views on Islam should come as no surprise. He must have raised suspicions, too. As he did in the early 1940s, he used *Fatḥ al-majīd* (the commentary on Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*) during his lessons at the mosque and strove to disseminate the book with the help of the Saudi religious establishment. Taking advantage of his connections, al-Hilali asked Wahhabi scholars for extra copies and claims to have received nearly 350 of them via airmail, which he then sold in various Moroccan cities. He also admitted to having received money from ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Baz, who later became grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, as well as an even greater number of free books from another prominent Wahhabi whose name he did not disclose.[42]

Again, there is no good reason to doubt the veracity of these confessions. We know from private correspondence that in the late 1950s and 1960s Ibn Baz was involved in the business of commissioning agents outside of Saudi Arabia to print and ship thousands of books deemed beneficial to purist Salafis. Muhibb al-Din Khatib, who was still alive and still ran the Salafiyya Press and Bookstore in Cairo, was one of them.[43] Al-Hilali, for his part, seems to have acted as a Moroccan auxiliary and consultant for the Saudi religious establishment. A few letters that he wrote to Ibn Baz in the summer of 1968 show him trying to ingratiate himself with the future grand mufti, assessing the performance of a Saudi-based Algerian scholar who had just spent a month in Meknes as a guest lecturer as well as reporting on the soundness of certain unidentified Moroccan scholars' creed.[44] The support of foreign patrons must have given al-Hilali more confidence and latitude than other state-appointed Moroccan preachers, who might not have dared to cause religious controversies for fear of losing their only source of revenue.

The Muslims of Meknes were, therefore, justified in associating al-Hilali with the Wahhabis. In his memoirs, al-Hilali provides other, more

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specific, examples. During a lesson at the mosque, as he was blaming all those who contradicted the teachings of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab on *tawḥīd*, one heckler interrupted him and asked him if he was implicitly charging the king of Morocco with sin. Indeed, the monarch happened to support some of the religious practices al-Hilali was decrying. For reasons that served the Palace's interests, Hasan II showed respect to local saints and often dispatched ministers to the *mawāsim* organized in their honor.[45] These were practices that al-Hilali condemned out of hand, even after they had acquired a political or nationalist significance. For instance, he did not hesitate to criticize the annual and quasi-official festivities at Mulay Idris, near Meknes, where thousands of pilgrims come to visit the tomb of Idris I (d. 791), a descendant of the Prophet and the founder of Morocco's first ruling dynasty.[46] Thus, when the heckler called on al-Hilali, the latter must have felt torn between his purist convictions and his reluctance to criticize the ruler. To dodge the issue, he allegedly replied that the king was sinless and accused the heckler of being a sinner, an ignorant person, and a liar. Al-Hilali maintains that some people in the audience sided with him and started shouting back at the heckler. Soon enough, the situation degenerated: under threats of physical violence, the man had to seek refuge in the minaret. As a result of the tumult, al-Hilali temporarily lost the right to teach until he explained himself to the authorities.[47]

Over time, al-Hilali's polemical and inflexible religious attitude appears to have irked state officials. At the behest of a friend, he started giving lessons in a new mosque built outside the old city of Meknes. Although he was acting only as a substitute imam and teacher whenever his colleague was unavailable, he set out to rectify the time of the morning prayer, which he claims was slightly too early to be valid.[48] Some people complained about this sudden departure from the status quo and tried to have the designated imam fired for letting al-Hilali be his substitute. The disagreement quickly devolved into a larger conflict between supporters and opponents of al-Hilali. The opponents went to the local governor (*ʿāmil*) and complained about "Wahhabi" agitators who rejected the practices of other Sunnis. The governor called the Minister of Habous and Islamic Affairs, Bargash, who requested al-Hilali to come to Rabat. In the capital, the high official who received him on behalf of the ministry was ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Dukkali (d. 1976), the son of Abu Shuʿayb al-Dukkali. Here is how al-Hilali recalled their meeting:

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> Al-Dukkali began by telling me: "I traveled to India and in each university or scholarly assembly that I visited, I found people who fervently extolled you; many of them told me that they were your students. So, I rejoiced at that and, upon my return, I informed His Majesty Hasan II as well as the Minister. We were proud of you. Moreover, my father, the great Abu Shuʿayb al-Dukkali, was the first to call people to Salafism in Morocco, so I am among the supporters and admirers of your efforts. However, it is necessary to use moderation and to relinquish the harshness [*tashaddud*] that causes dissension."[49]

Of course, al-Hilali claimed his innocence and swore that he condemned harshness as much as al-Dukkali. But judging from this and other examples, it is easy to believe that Moroccan authorities grew uneasy about al-Hilali's views and demeanor.[50] He triggered the kind of disorder that government officials wished to avoid. During the 1940s, under colonial rule, he had a much easier time justifying his religious zeal. The people whom he then branded as sinners and heretics often represented a threat to the Moroccan cause in the eyes of local nationalists as well. Where he could blame Sufis for their misguided religious beliefs and actions, others could blame them for their collaboration with the colonial authorities. Likewise, blind imitators could be opposed from a purely religious angle, as al-Hilali did in 1942 when he portrayed them as misguided Muslims who refuse to abide by the Sunna of the Prophet. But the same blind imitators could be condemned for other reasons as well. Moroccan nationalists, regardless of their religious convictions, were able to argue that the partisans of *taqlīd* prevented people from breaking the shackles of ignorance that made the Moroccan nation such an easy target for colonization.

In the 1960s, however, the strictly religious goals of al-Hilali no longer overlapped with the sociopolitical objectives of the Moroccan elite. There no longer was a common cause that justified his religious intolerance toward fellow Sunni Muslims. The people whom he now called sinners and heretics were, for the most part, loyal subjects of an independent kingdom—all political parties and actors were trying to mobilize them and gain their support. In an era of postindependence reconstruction, the raison d'être of al-Hilali's religious zeal was far from obvious. Because the state did not intend to enforce a purist understanding of Islam, the

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Ministry of Habous had to intervene whenever his preaching caused trouble that served no political purpose and disturbed public order.

Disillusions on Campus

As a professor, al-Hilali's record was less controversial. He had been involved in a few heated debates with fellow faculty members in Lucknow and Baghdad, but the repercussions hardly extended beyond the halls of academe. When he taught Arabic grammar and literature, whether in Oujda, Delhi, Lucknow, Bonn, Berlin, or Baghdad, he never stirred controversies that took on political overtones. Language lessons kept him away from the most sensitive religious issues he so passionately debated in the mosques.

Thanks to the recommendation of Gannun, al-Hilali started working at the newly created Muhammad V University in Rabat soon after his return to Morocco in 1959 and continued his career as professor of Arabic and Arabic literature. Once again, he was an asset to the university insofar as he was one of the most qualified Moroccan candidates available at the time.[51] But the atmosphere on campus disappointed him. In 1970, he confessed that he had been struck by the amount of ignorance and heresy at the university.[52] Among other things, the critical attitude toward religion that prevailed in scholarly circles there prompted him to write several articles against agnosticism and atheism throughout the 1960s.

The structure and intellectual orientation of the new Muhammad V University could only have displeased al-Hilali, who, ironically, had supported the establishment of a modern university in independent Morocco. Alas, the ideal university he had imagined did not correspond to the one that was inaugurated in December 1957. Muhammad V University was originally comprised of three faculties—law, natural sciences, and humanities—each headed by a French scholar. The first dean and father of the faculty of humanities (*faculté des lettres*) was none other than the famous historian of North Africa Charles-André Julien. Despite his known anticolonial sentiments, Julien's plan was to establish a secular institution modeled after the Sorbonne in which French would be the language of instruction. But the Moroccan government's decision to add an Arabic section, whose creation and development Julien did not oversee, soon fostered tensions. Much to

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the dean's displeasure, the Ministry of Education unilaterally appointed Arab professors, many of whom were Egyptian nationals. It was actually through this channel that al-Hilali joined the faculty. Julien was not able to exercise any control over the selection process, nor could he set norms regarding the candidates' required qualifications. His inability to guarantee similar academic standards and guidelines for both the French and the Arabic sections of the humanities fueled a crisis that led to his resignation in 1960.[53]

Yet the French influence did not vanish overnight. Most of the Moroccan professors who gradually replaced the European ones were themselves graduates of French universities. They were bilingual, were openly favorable to the political left, and had little esteem for their Arabic-speaking colleagues.[54] This was not the intellectual atmosphere that al-Hilali had expected to find in the first modern university of independent Morocco. It is no wonder, then, that he rejoiced at the news of the creation in 1964 of a new institute devoted to the study of hadith. Dar al-Hadith al-Hasaniyya, as it came to be known, was part of the monarchy's plan to develop and control religious education. By sponsoring the institute, Hasan II sought to display his commitment to Islam and increase his own religious legitimacy. The project also conveniently fragmented the religious field so as to prevent the emergence of an autonomous and united corps of ʿulama. Located in Rabat and closely linked to the Palace, Dar al-Hadith further marginalized the Qarawiyyin in Fes, much to the chagrin of Gannun and al-Fasi.[55]

Al-Hilali, however, seemed unconcerned with either the standing of the Qarawiyyin or the political rationale behind the establishment of Dar al-Hadith. The opening of an Islamic institute that emphasized the science of hadith—a discipline so dear to him—was a blessing. He had high hopes for the new school and wasted no time in expressing them publicly. Dar al-Hadith symbolized the beginning of a new era, he wrote; it would revive religious science and cause the wave of heresy and sin to recede. He even expected Dar al-Hadith to be the first step toward a comprehensive Islamization of law, whereby the Qurʾan and the Sunna would become the sole sources of legislation in every region of Morocco. This, he thought, would have repercussions well beyond the kingdom: "May [Dar al-Hadith] please the believers and anger the enemies of religion not only in Morocco, but in the whole world."[56]

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Although al-Hilali's rhetorical flourish was meant to flatter Hasan II and hopefully secure an appointment to Dar al-Hadith, the future he envisioned for the new institution was a genuine expression of his transnational aspirations. It was strikingly similar to the optimistic future that Rashid Rida had envisioned for Dar al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshad back in the early 1910s. Al-Hilali wanted Dar al-Hadith to train multilingual missionaries who, in addition to being well versed in Arabic, would be required to learn a foreign language, preferably English or French. Only then could they perform the religious obligation of bringing the message of Islam to all the nations of the world.[57] But whereas Rida wanted to use global proselytism to propagate a modernist and unifying articulation of Islam that could help Muslims withstand the challenges of imperialism, al-Hilali expected the graduates of Dar al-Hadith to spread purist Salafism worldwide for only one reason: because true Islam was the only path to happiness in this world and the next. He did not, however, explain what constituted happiness in this world. Pure Islam simply had to prevail because God rewards true and obedient Muslims.

Cursory references to salvation, the hereafter, and this-worldly happiness were not likely to alarm the Palace. Nevertheless, the purist standards that al-Hilali put forward clashed with the religious status quo that the Moroccan monarchy was trying to maintain for its own benefit. The authorities may have realized from the onset that his religious views were not entirely suitable for the new institution because, despite his experience and enthusiastic public declarations, he did not receive an invitation to join the faculty at Dar al-Hadith until two months after its inauguration. The belated job offer hurt his feelings, but he accepted it. The Minister of Habous, Bargash, appointed al-Hilali professor of Qurʾanic exegesis and put him in charge of a course devoted to Imam Malik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ*—a compilation of hadiths and sayings of the Companions followed by Malik's own commentaries. But it did not take long before al-Hilali realized that his purist Salafi approach was not going to be enforced at Dar al-Hadith. He claims that four of his students, who were Tijani Sufis, hated his lectures and created unrest by constantly asking stubborn questions.[58] When he finally lost patience and decided to expel one of the students from the classroom, he found no support from his superiors. His dean was also a Sufi. Tired and disillusioned, al-Hilali resigned after only two and a half months. Although he listed several logistical and personal factors justifying his departure,

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he must also have come to the realization that Dar al-Hadith, despite its name, could not live up to his expectations.

ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Benabdallah (d. 2012), the man who had previously hired al-Hilali at Muhammad V University in 1959, also taught at Dar al-Hadith for over two decades. When I interviewed him, he had little positive to say about al-Hilali's brief stint at the institute. He told me stories of advanced students asking religious questions that disconcerted al-Hilali and for which he had no answers. Benabdallah also claimed that many students regarded al-Hilali as a man of poor intellect who merely happened to hold a diploma from the University of Berlin and whose most remarkable talent was to know a fair amount of hadiths by heart.[59] Benabdallah's testimony must, of course, be taken with a grain of salt: he was himself a committed Tijani and had many reasons to disparage both al-Hilali and his purist Salafi approach to Islam. Nevertheless, these allegations, combined with the fact that Benabdallah was one of the Sufis who enjoyed a long and successful career at Dar al-Hadith, lend credence to al-Hilali's contention that he felt an outcast.

Apostasy and Lack of Religious Commitment

In addition to being a preacher and a professor, al-Hilali continued to write articles about religion on a regular basis. The head of the management committee of *Daʿwat al-Haqq*, the Ministry of Habous' official journal, was his friend al-Tanji. Al-Hilali could, therefore, count on the journal to publish his articles. Most of these writings showed a strong sense of resentment. The elite, according to al-Hilali, too often neglected Islamic identity and integrity. In that sense, the end of colonialism had led to a disappointing outcome: even though Morocco and most Muslim countries were now free to return to true Islam, religious norms were still improperly enforced and sometimes ignored altogether. He made it his duty to champion purist Salafism in the face of those who slighted it or were too lenient to secure its proper observance.

One key example is a 1963 article in which al-Hilali took an uncompromising stance toward the Bahaʾi affair that had begun the year before. In the spring of 1962, the police department of the city of Nador in northern Morocco received complaints to the effect that some Bahaʾi activists were

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propagating their faith among Muslims. An investigation concluded that a few Bahaʾis from Iran and one from Syria had indeed been active in Nador, Tetouan, Fes, and Meknes. It was also revealed that they had managed to convert local youths. As a result, fourteen people (thirteen Moroccan citizens and one Syrian national) were arrested and faced criminal charges of rebellion, breach of public order, illegal constitution of an association, and violation of religious convictions. In a nutshell, the Bahaʾis were accused of choosing and propagating a heretical faith that contravened the state religion—Islam—whose status was enshrined in the Moroccan constitution. In December 1962, the tribunal of Nador condemned three of the Bahaʾi converts to death. Five other defendants were condemned to life in prison, one received a fifteen-year sentence, and the remaining five were acquitted.[60]

These events created a national and international crisis. The Istiqlal Party and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, whose head was then al-Fasi, were in favor of the legal actions and condemnations.[61] The UNFP, for its part, chose to remain neutral, whereas liberal commentators lashed out against the trial, its outcome, and its moral implications. In France, the leading newspaper, *Le Monde*, spoke of an inquisition in Morocco.[62] When the tribunal of Nador issued death sentences, the monarchy found itself under considerable international pressure to overturn the verdict. In April 1963, Hasan II pledged to a group of American dignitaries that he would pardon the Bahaʾis, whose case was then under appeal. But the king was spared the task of resorting to his discretionary powers when the Supreme Court in Rabat exonerated the accused in December 1963.

What prompted al-Hilali to react publicly to this crisis was a letter he received from one of his former pupils, ʿIsam al-Alusi, who resided in Britain at the time. Al-Alusi had read about the unfolding of the thorny Bahaʾi affair and complained that it had sparked debates between Muslims and non-Muslims in his community. He decided to turn to al-Hilali to clarify the matter: What was Islam's position with respect to such groups as the Bahaʾis? For the sake of Muslims in Britain, al-Alusi requested al-Hilali's permission to translate the answer into English so that it could be distributed in a local Islamic center and published in the Pakistani-based journal *Muslim News International*.

The fact that al-Hilali tackled the Bahaʾi affair in *Daʿwat al-Haqq* at the behest of a Muslim based in Europe is telling. Unlike many other commentators in his native country, al-Hilali did not conceive of the crisis as

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a Moroccan issue. For him, apostasy was a major sin whose legal consequences were attested to by scriptural evidence valid for all places at all times. Neither Moroccan politics nor contextual considerations warranted leniency in this case. He thus based his answer on a series of sound and acceptable hadiths. The three most important ones state, in different terms, that it is forbidden to kill a fellow Muslim except in three distinct cases: when it is proven that the person has committed adultery, has deliberately and illegally killed an individual, or has abandoned Islam and divided the community. After establishing the validity of these prophetic reports, he insisted on the religious duty of enforcing the rules they contained. Whoever was having second thoughts about these rules and their binding nature was "more ignorant than a donkey."[63]

The thrust of al-Hilali's argument was that Muslims could not let pity, empathy, or self-consciousness prevent the implementation of God's justice as carried through His Prophet. He remembered a case where a man of Yemeni origins and an Indian woman had both admitted to committing adultery before a judge in Mecca during the *ḥajj* in 1957. The *qāḍī* condemned them both to death by stoning, but some pilgrims had protested the decision. According to al-Hilali, these people knew nothing about Islam but its name. The question of apostasy, as well, left no room for negotiation, even if the Bahaʾi affair was giving Islam a bad name in the West. The relevant hadiths were too explicit, and past textualist scholars of great repute—Ibn Qudama, Ibn Rajab, Ibn Hazm—had clearly established the meaning of abandoning Islam. Within al-Hilali's epistemological framework, there was simply no way to circumvent their interpretation. Other medieval authorities, including the Maliki scholar Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (whom al-Hilali deemed crypto-Zahiri), even accepted the killing of Muslims who propagated blameworthy innovations (*bidʿ*). How then, al-Hilali asked, could one justify sparing the life of these Bahaʾis, whose conduct and beliefs were clearly heretical?

Conscious that scriptural arguments alone might not convince Western and Westernized critics, al-Hilali provided his readers with other kinds of rationales. Because Islam does not distinguish between religion and state, Muslims, he said, are as entitled to execute apostates as Western nations are entitled to execute traitors. Was not Pierre Laval (d. 1945), the former vice-premier of Vichy France, executed for high treason at the end of the Second World War? With this *tu quoque* argument, al-Hilali claimed that

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it was illogical for Westerners to criticize the condemnation of Moroccan Bahaʾis for apostasy. On the contrary, nothing was more illogical than attempts to dissociate political creed (*ʿaqīda siyāsiyya*) from religious creed and to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's: "For [Muslims], everything belongs to God and nothing to Caesar, for [our] Caesar is God."[64] He viewed man-made laws and regulations as fundamentally absurd, and in that sense, his critique extended not only to the postcolonial Moroccan state but also to all Moroccans who demanded the execution of the Bahaʾis for civic reasons. No one should be invoking Moroccan nationalism because the crux of the problem was not public order or the cohesion of the Moroccan nation, as the spokespersons of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs tried to frame the affair. Too many people were missing the point that apostasy was first and foremost a crime against God. The Bahaʾis, therefore, had to be executed for infringing on the rights of God. But, alas, their case was brought before a Moroccan civil court that applied Western-inspired positive law, and as a result, the accused were sentenced to death for the wrong reasons. Had Islamic courts retained their authority and prerogatives, al-Hilali felt that such a long-standing crisis would never have occurred in the first place.

The lack of Islamic references in postindependence institutions and policies did indeed cause al-Hilali a great deal of distress. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the series of sixteen articles he wrote in response to a 1964 paper by the Lebanese Christian philosopher of Egyptian origins René Habashi (d. 2003). A friend and disciple of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Maurice Zundel, Habashi was neither an atheist nor a detractor of religion. Yet al-Hilali construed his thoughts as hostile to faith in general and to Islam in particular. Published in Beirut, Habashi's paper was a discussion of the psychological impediments to planning, progress, and the development of education in the Arab world. One such impediment was religious, though Habashi did not dismiss religion altogether. What he condemned, rather, was a certain type of faith—a caricatural faith (*al-īmān al-kārīkātūrī*), as he put it—that was at once domineering, intimidating, closed-minded, exclusivist, antihumanist, and obscurantist and was thus determined to deny the advances of scientific discoveries. This type of faith, Habashi argued, served as a holy pretext for educational inertia. But faith could evolve: humans would be mistaken to try to deal with the problem by eliminating God altogether instead of reforming themselves.[65]

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One wonders how al-Hilali might have reacted to such arguments back in the 1920s or 1930s. In the mid-1960s, however, he took Habashi's remarks to be an attack on religion—and in particular on purist Salafism. The sixteen articles that he devoted to rectifying the alleged errors of Habashi became a remedial enterprise that grew well beyond a tit-for-tat response to the original "offense." Until December 1966, al-Hilali channeled all of his postindependence grievances into this work. For the occasion, he even revived the old argument according to which Westerners, the most advanced of all people, were themselves eminently religious. In Germany, Switzerland, Britain, and other European countries, religion was so central to life that even governments were involved in sustaining its primacy: state school systems were confessional, and everywhere religion was part of the curriculum. As a result, departments of theology in every university produced a high number of doctoral students who never remained unemployed.[66]

At a time when Islamic activists often decried the moral decay of the West, then, al-Hilali praised Western democracies for granting their citizens full freedom of conscience and the right to practice their religion freely. But this old argument, which dated from the 1930s, proved even less persuasive than before. In truth, al-Hilali was not ready to accept the full implications of his own position. He did not value freedom of conscience, and his objective was not merely to promote religious identity: rather, he yearned for social and political conditions in which purist Salafism could play a paramount role. Moreover, and despite his claims to the contrary, he could not escape the conclusion that the threat of secularism, agnosticism, and atheism emanated from the West. This is why he accused Habashi of emulating the work of Julian Huxley (probably his 1927 *Religion Without Revelation*), whose scientific humanism relegated the idea of God to a more primitive stage of spiritual development. Al-Hilali also warned his readers that "spiritual colonialism [*al-istiʿmār al-rūḥī*]" was a conspiracy whose evil was a thousand times greater than that of material colonialism. It was a cancer (*saraṭān*) that led people like Habashi to publish articles that were insulting to God.[67] Attempting to reconcile these contradictory claims about the West required a stretch of logic. Al-Hilali found himself forced to argue that the minority of irreligious or *less* religious Westerners—1 or 2 percent of the population at the most—was too small to exert any influence in Europe and America but somehow had plenty of ignorant followers in the Arab world.[68]

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In any case, Habashi served as little more than a straw man in all of these articles. Al-Hilali used him to vent his own frustrations with a postindependence order in which true Islam was still not the driving force behind everything. The European colonizers were gone, Muslims now had the power to ensure the triumph of purist Salafism, and yet they remained complacent. To make matters worse, al-Hilali's criticisms left much to be desired. He was not attuned to the fashionable intellectual trends of the time: he showed little interest for political theory, had no penchant for socialism, could not present himself as a typical Moroccan or Arab nationalist, and was not even an Islamist à la Sayyid Qutb. Rather, he was an old-fashioned Salafi polemicist who used his pen to defend pure Islam by all means necessary. As a result, his articles had only a marginal impact and even elicited dismissive and negative reactions.

The Moroccan intellectual and nationalist ʿAbd al-Hadi al-Sharaybi (d. 1987), for example, declared that al-Hilali should be publishing a separate book instead of submitting his series of articles to *Daʿwat al-Haqq*. This protracted tirade against Habashi not only came in an odd format, al-Sharaybi noted, but it also interested very few people and, therefore, did not deserve to appear in Morocco's foremost religious magazine. On the issue of format, al-Hilali retorted that the publication of a lengthy series of articles was perfectly normal. He reminded al-Sharaybi that Rida had published his Qurʾanic exegesis piecemeal in *al-Manar* for thirty-five years.[69] But this was precisely the problem: al-Hilali's work was modeled after a type of Islamic activism that many considered passé. Further, it was a question not just of format but also of content. Al-Sharaybi failed to see the purpose and relevance of al-Hilali's purist ideas in a postindependence context. Of course, the latter insisted that his articles were of the highest importance, for he had many admirers who looked forward to reading them each month. But these individuals, it appears, were his own associates scattered across Europe and the Muslim world.[70]

Criticism also came from students at Muhammad V University. One group blamed al-Hilali for his harsh attitude toward Habashi.[71] The constant accusations of heresy and disbelief (*kufr*), the call for a mandatory jihad against the enemies of Islam who invited Muslims to renounce their religion, and the suggestion that Habashi deserved to be decapitated for his offense unless he recanted did not sit well with the educated youths in Rabat. These students also belittled al-Hilali's scripturalist arguments.

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What was the point of quoting the Qur'an and the Sunna at length when Habashi did not even believe in these sources? (Habashi, a Christian philosopher, was of Coptic background.) Evidently, this type of religious harangue was not going to earn al-Hilali the recognition and accolades he felt he deserved. The raison d'être of his presence in independent Morocco was growing exceedingly unclear, and by the late 1960s, he was ready for a change.

Saudi Arabia Beckons

Al-Hilali never completely lost contact with the religious establishment of Saudi Arabia. Like al-Fiqi and other purist Salafis, he cultivated connections with top Wahhabi scholars during his frequent visits to the country for the purpose of performing the pilgrimage. On one such occasion in 1968, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Baz made a timely offer he could not refuse. As vice-president of the Islamic University in Medina, Ibn Baz invited al-Hilali to join the faculty. When Ibn Baz told him that the Islamic University needed someone like him, al-Hilali replied that he, too, was in need of the Islamic University.[72] A formal offer came through the Saudi embassy in Rabat in the summer of 1968, and the Moroccan Ministry of Education eventually approved the transfer.

Considering how al-Hilali felt at the time, the prospect of moving back to Saudi Arabia was inviting. True, his departure from the Hijaz in 1930 had left him somewhat bitter, but the squabbles of the past no longer mattered. He certainly bore no grudge against the current religious and political elite. From a Saudi perspective, the offer was no less opportune. In the wake of the Arab Cold War and during the rapid development of its educational system, the kingdom needed Muslim scholars capable of conveying its Islamic message. The establishment of the Islamic University in Medina in 1961 must be understood in this context. One of its primary purposes was to promote Islam as a bulwark against the secular nationalist and socialist trends that dominated the politics of many third-world countries. But the Wahhabi ʿulama were too few to carry out this task, and their traditional religious training had not prepared them well to grapple with secular intellectuals.[73] From its inception, therefore, the Islamic University in Medina emerged as a global institution. University regulations stipulated

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that most of the students had to be recruited from abroad, and foreigners played an equally important role at the professorial level.

The foreign religious workforce of Saudi Arabia included members of the Muslim Brotherhood from countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, but it also comprised purist Salafi scholars who sometimes had connections with Islamist circles but who more often were freelancers or belonged to apolitical, pietistic associations. Al-Hilali was one of them. In Meknes and Rabat, he faced no persecution and had no reason to flee. He chose to move to Saudi Arabia because no other state could offer him the kind of intellectual environment where his purist Salafi views would not only be tolerated but also encouraged and rewarded. Instead of being considered an oddity or a liability, he became an asset. In 1970, he noted with pride that his polemical articles of the mid-1960s, including his tirade against Habashi, had fascinated Saudi diplomats and decision makers to the point that the Saudi Council of Ministers stood ready to print and distribute the articles in book form.[74]

What happened to al-Hilali is indicative of a larger trend. Between the late 1940s and the late 1960s, many other purist Salafis from various origins and sometimes with comparable intellectual journeys either moved to Saudi Arabia or reinforced their ties to the kingdom. The Lebanese scholar Saʿdi Yasin (d. 1976) is a case in point. Born in Ottoman Damascus in 1887, he studied with Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar and followed him to the Saudi-conquered Hijaz from 1927 to 1929. There, like al-Hilali and the disciples of Rida, Yasin worked as a professor. He settled in Beirut afterward and remained there until his death in 1976, but he had the opportunity to renew his relationship with Saudi Arabia in the postindependence era. From 1952 onward, he served as the official religious mentor for Saudi students registered at the American University in Beirut. He also served on the committee that established the Saudi-based Muslim World League in 1962, participating in the league's outreach programs and regularly contributing to its journal. His association with Saudi Arabia worried certain Lebanese, including state officials, but this did not deter Yasin from carrying out his educational work. Over the years, many of his Lebanese pupils pursued religious studies in Saudi Arabia.[75]

Many other purist Salafis chose to leave their home countries and relocate to Mecca, Medina, or Riyadh. Among them were two scholars who later became famous: ʿAbd al-Razzaq ʿAfifi (d. 1994) and Abu Bakr Jabir

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al-Jazaʾiri (b. 1921). Born in Egypt, ʿAfifi studied under Mahmud Shaltut and Mustafa al-Maraghi as well as three of Rida's religious disciples who moved to the Hijaz in the late 1920s: al-Fiqi, ʿAbd al-Razzaq Hamza, and Abu al-Samh. But ʿAfifi did not immediately follow them to Mecca and Medina. He graduated from al-Azhar in 1932, taught in Alexandria, and joined Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya. It was not until 1949 that he received an invitation to move to Saudi Arabia along with a sizable delegation of graduates from al-Azhar. Once in the kingdom, his career took a turn for the better. In the early 1950s, he taught in various schools and played a key role in the development of the Scientific Institute (*al-maʿhad al-ʿilmī*) in Riyadh, which later formed the nucleus of the Imam Muhammad ibn Saʿud Islamic University.[76] He returned to Egypt as leader of Ansar al-Sunna following al-Fiqi's death in 1959 but left this position after a year and headed back to Saudi Arabia. In the early 1960s, he participated in the elaboration of the curriculum of the Islamic University in Medina and was later admitted to the country's highest and most select religious bodies, including the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Legal Advice (often referred to as *dār al-iftāʾ*) and the Board of Senior ʿUlama (*hayʾat kibār al-ʿulamāʾ*). He acquired Saudi citizenship and died in Riyadh.[77]

Al-Jazaʾiri comes from a village near Biskra, Algeria—a religious milieu in which Sufism and the Maliki *madhhab* prevailed. After studying in Biskra, he moved to Algiers and worked as a teacher in a local Islamic school. It was in the capital that he met and soon began studying with Tayyib al-ʿUqbi (d. 1960), a Salafi scholar and collaborator of the famed activist Ibn Badis. Although al-ʿUqbi was undoubtedly modernist in many respects—he was director of al-Nadi al-Taraqqi (the Progress Club) in Algiers—he had the reputation of being less politicized but more religiously uncompromising than Ibn Badis. One historian described him as an aggressive proselyte whose self-righteousness and intransigence, especially toward Sufis, earned the Algerian reformist movement more enemies than sympathizers.[78] By the time the young al-Jazaʾiri moved to Algiers, al-ʿUqbi already had a strained relationship with the Association of the Muslim Algerian ʿUlama, and he broke from it in 1938. Nevertheless, the master made a strong impression on his pupil, who, in turn, favored an apolitical stance and emphasized religious purism. Al-Jazaʾiri joined the organization Shabab al-Muwahhidin al-Muslimin (the Monotheist Muslim Youths), which

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al-ʿUqbi established in 1950, and became editor of two of its religious journals, *al-Daʿi* and *al-Liwaʾ*.[79]

On the eve of the Algerian war of independence, probably in 1953, al-Jazaʾiri decided to leave the country to pursue higher religious studies in Saudi Arabia. He attended the lectures of several Salafi scholars in Medina and, in 1961, obtained a degree from the Faculty of Shariʿa in Riyadh, which was then part of the Scientific Institute. That same year he started working as a professor at the Islamic University in Medina.[80] He became a close collaborator of Ibn Baz, a best-selling Salafi author, and a prominent figure in Saudi-sponsored international proselytism, especially in North Africa. (He was the guest lecturer whom al-Hilali hosted for over a month in Meknes in 1968 and whose performance al-Hilali assessed on behalf of Ibn Baz.) Considering these achievements, it is easy to understand why al-Jazaʾiri never resettled in Algeria. The secular regime that held power from 1962 onward could not offer him an environment as hospitable and rewarding as that of Saudi Arabia. Not all foreign Salafis, however, spent extended periods of time in the kingdom. Some moved there for a few years only, although they generally remained within the orbit of the Saudi religious establishment afterward. Al-Hilali belongs to this category and, to some extent, so does the famous purist Salafi scholar Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999), who first left Syria for Saudi Arabia in the early 1960s to escape the increasingly coercive conditions of life under the United Arab Republic.[81]

The list of key non-Saudi Salafis who moved to the kingdom as colonialism receded is a long one. It includes Muhammad Aman ibn ʿAli al-Jami (d. 1996) from Ethiopia, Hammad al-Ansari (d. 1997) from Mali, ʿAli al-Tantawi (d. 1999) from Syria, Muqbil al-Wadiʿi from Yemen, ʿAbd al-Samad al-Katib (d. 2010) from India, and many members of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya in Egypt, such as ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Wakil, Muhammad Khalid Harras (d. 1975), and Muhammad ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Banna (d. 2009), to name but a few individuals. Various factors motivated their decision to leave their home countries. Some headed to Saudi Arabia because postcolonial state policies had either displeased or marginalized them, as was the case with al-Hilali, al-Albani, and al-Tantawi. Many West African Salafis from the French Union, however, left earlier. They appear to have taken advantage of the Fourth Republic's strategy to facilitate rather than curtail the flow of Muslim pilgrims to Mecca in hopes of stifling the appeal of secular

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anticolonial ideologies.[82] Those who were more interested in religious purism than local nationalist struggles took this opportunity to relocate to a society that better suited them.

Saudi Arabia, to be sure, had much to offer to ambitious students and scholars of Islam. Well before the oil boom, the establishment of new religious schools lured purist Salafis from around the globe who were attracted by the prospect of pursuing their true passion while earning respect, enjoying protection, and perhaps even getting a decent job. The Scientific Institute in Riyadh, which opened in 1950, is a case in point. By 1954, it had about seven hundred students at the elementary, secondary, and graduate levels—including foreigners—and nearly sixty professors from various regions of the Muslim world.[83] The multiplication of these institutes and the creation of additional Islamic universities created a demand for skilled religious specialists. With its targeted recruitment efforts, the religious establishment of Saudi Arabia contributed to building the country's reputation as a haven for purist Salafis. ʿAfifi, Harras, al-Albani, and al-Hilali, for example, were not bold individuals who struck out on their own. They all received a job offer after some influential Saudi scholar identified them as Salafis of sound creed and vouched for them. Religious activists who did not long for a new patron or did not subscribe to a purist understanding of Islam were, therefore, less likely to try their luck in Arabia or curry favor with Saudi ʿulama in order to receive an invitation to the kingdom.

Among those religious activists not drawn to Saudi Arabia were the modernist Salafis of Morocco. Despite their disapproval of the Moroccan monarchy's politics and growing power, most of them neither wanted nor were able to follow al-Hilali's path. They did, however, have strong nationalist credentials, which they hoped to use to further their objectives at home. Recognizing their potential power as opposition figures, the Palace sought to placate these modernist Salafis by providing them with ample professional opportunities after 1956. Mukhtar al-Susi, for example, became the first Minister of Habous and was later appointed to the Crown Council, remaining a member until his untimely death in 1963.[84] Gannun, for his part, became governor of Tangier in 1956.[85] Muhammad al-Makki al-Nasiri served on various royal commissions and diplomatic missions, was appointed governor of Agadir from 1961 to 1963, taught in several institutions including Dar al-Hadith al-Hasaniyya, and later became Minister of Habous and Islamic Affairs.[86] Another modernist Salafi from the

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former northern zone, Muhammad Dawud, served on the committee that drafted the Mudawwana in the late 1950s. He thereafter became head of the Royal Library in Rabat. ʿAbdallah al-Jirari (d. 1983) became chief inspector for the Ministry of Education.[87] Al-Fasi, al-Tanji, and ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Dukkali, as we have seen, also worked for the state. (Besides being a high official in the Ministry of Habous, al-Dukkali was the chaplain of the Royal Armed Forces.)

It did not take long before the modernist Salafis realized that such professional rewards served a political purpose. The Palace was pursuing a policy of domestication, whereby the ʿulama could neither challenge the political and religious dominance of the king nor escape his control. In a letter addressed to a friend who had just been appointed as *qāḍī* (judge), al-Susi wrote:

> I do not know if I should congratulate you on your promotion or offer you my condolences for losing the freedom you enjoyed thus far. [. . .] Today you bring your feet closer to golden and shiny shackles [. . .] to which you will quickly grow accustomed. You will adapt to the new conditions of obedience and servility toward your benefactors, so that you may continue to enjoy their favors.[88]

Al-Susi's words conveyed a real sense of resignation about the fate of modernist Salafis in postindependence Morocco. For better or worse, the wisest course, it seemed, was to submit to the will of the Palace and hope for a brighter future. That said, the modernist Salafis did not entirely abandon political activism until about the 1970s. Some of them remained involved in party politics and continued to call for progressive sociopolitical reforms inspired by Islam. But they had to work within the system and were forced to compete with stronger rivals. In the 1950s and 1960s, modernist Salafis suffered the consequences of the appeal of secular and leftist ideologies. Within the Istiqlal Party, they lost the upper hand to their more liberal and secular partners.[89] Eventually, they also lost control of their own Islamic idiom. The Palace appropriated many of their main themes and ideas, thereby pulling the rug of independent influence from under their feet. From the late 1960s onward, the Islamists gradually outflanked the modernist Salafis as a more electrifying and compelling alternative for transforming society and politics on a religious basis.

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Because of the sociopolitical dimension of their approach to Islamic reform, the modernist Salafis of Morocco proved particularly vulnerable after independence. Here, one must bear in mind that this vulnerability extended to their conceptualization of Salafism as well. Reflecting on the appeal of secularism in the Arab world, al-Fasi noted with chagrin that "Salafism has failed every time it left the theoretical level for the practical one."[90] That is because he understood Salafism to be a multifaceted movement of reform and civilizational progress that used Islam's glorious past to refashion and propel modern Muslim society forward (*ilā al-amām*)—and forward, in early 1960s Morocco, meant toward Islamic socialism and democracy.[91] Defined as such, Salafism was bound to evoke an incomplete or failed project, especially given that its exponents had little to no political leverage and soon ceased to challenge the status quo. But it was also a peculiar definition of Salafism, one that never gained much traction in Islamic activist circles outside of Morocco, and as a result, it faded with the marginalization of its few articulators and proponents. By contrast, the purist Salafis and their conceptualization of Salafism fared better, in part because their message was generic and apolitical rather than national and sociopolitical. As mere religious specialists and directors of conscience, they were in a better position to weather these uncertain times and did not run the risk of being defeated in the political arena.

In sum, the Moroccan reformers lost the struggle over the meaning of the label *Salafism* even before Saudi Arabia fully developed its formidable network of transnational proselytism. These reformers' notion of modernist Salafism has, however, survived in Moroccan literature as well as in scholarship about North Africa more generally, though always as a thing of the past.[92] Among Moroccans, it remained commonplace until about the time of the Casablanca bombings of 2003, which forced many people to grapple with competing notions of Salafism. At a conference organized by the Istiqlal Party in 2014, ʿAbbas al-Jirari, the son of modernist Salafi ʿAbdallah al-Jirari, made headlines by reminiscing about the positive connotations associated with Salafism in the colonial period. At that time, Salafism had been truly reformist and had prompted Moroccan society to engage in self-criticism. As he declared: "It was not like today's Salafism."[93]

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6

The Triumph and Ideologization of Purist Salafism

In the 1970s, the notion of purist Salafism came to overshadow the modernist version of the concept, which Arab intellectuals now call by such names as rationalist (ʿ*aqlāniyya*), renewalist (*tajdīdiyya*), or enlightened (*tanwīriyya*) Salafism. References to the modernist conceptualization of Salafism continued to appear here and there in the works of Middle Eastern authors, along with the mistaken belief that *salafiyya* was the slogan used by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad ʿAbduh. In North African and Western scholarship, such references were more common, but this parallel version of the concept no longer enjoyed committed and authoritative religious advocates in the marketplace of ideas. During the last three decades of the twentieth century, few individuals laid claim to the label *Salafism* besides purist Muslims from within the neo-Hanbali tradition. The Islamic activists who might otherwise have been tempted to use the term simply gave different names to their reformist endeavors. The Egyptian Hasan Hanafi (b. 1935), for instance, saw himself as heir to the school of al-Afghani and ʿAbduh but referred to his own position as "the Islamic Left."[1]

The reduced level of competition over the label *Salafism* (except among neo-Hanbalis, who continued to disagree about specific points of doctrine and epistemology) suggests that the meaning of the term was no longer up for grabs—or at least that its basic interpretation was less likely to shift. With Saudi Arabia as its main intellectual center of gravity, the concept

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became even more firmly associated with Islamic purism in general and, in the minds of many Muslims, with the Wahhabi movement in particular.[2] Institutional connections did much to reinforce this perception. To paraphrase the title of a book written by a disgruntled Moroccan student of Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, some purist Salafis were not merely religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) but also global religious agents (*ʿumalāʾ*) on behalf of the Wahhabi establishment.[3] As official or unofficial representatives of Saudi Arabia's religious institutions, they competed for social capital and financial advantages while promoting purist Salafism outside of the kingdom, often through teaching, book distribution, and lecture tours. Al-Hilali belonged to this category. He coordinated his activities with Saudi benefactors, even after he resettled in his native Morocco in 1974. Of course, not all purist Salafis were connected to the so-called Wahhabi establishment, but there were some such links, and they did not go unnoticed.

At the same time, the concept of Salafism gained even greater visibility. This was the culmination of a gradual trend that had begun in the 1920s and had gathered momentum in the wake of decolonization. The increasing use of Salafi labels in the intellectual sphere favored their use for naming institutions, which, in turn, allowed the same labels to circulate even more. Various institutions now bore the stamp of Salafism. Already in the 1960s, a Salafiyya Bookstore devoted exclusively to the publication of literature on Islamic purism came into being in Medina. The name of the institution was thus meant to refer to a particular brand of Islam, unlike the original Salafiyya Bookstore founded in Cairo in 1909 by Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib and ʿAbd al-Fattah Qatlan. A Salafiyya Press also opened in Benares, India, where the Saudis cosponsored the creation of a Salafiyya University in 1966. Another Salafiyya University, established a decade earlier in 1955 by the Ahl-i Hadith in Faisalabad, Pakistan, has been affiliated with the main centers of Islamic learning in Saudi Arabia.[4] Such developments snowballed, building on top of one another. Thus, when in 1988 the Syrian scholar Muhammad Saʿid Ramadan al-Buti published what is perhaps the most famous anti-Salafi book of the twentieth century, he quite naturally titled it *al-Salafiyya* (Salafism) and devoted particular attention to the term. This book has been widely read, and the purist Salafis who responded to it emphasized the same terminology.[5]

The growing visibility of the concept was concomitant with changes in how Muslim scholars presented it. One point worth stressing is that

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the last thirty years of the twentieth century saw the appearance of an indigenous literature *about* the purist notion of Salafism. Until then, the concept was not an object of study per se. Purist Salafis used the term and sometimes gave brief or indirect definitions of it. But prior to the 1970s, we can hardly say that systematic attempts were made to explain what purist Salafism meant. (In this regard, ʿAllal al-Fasi and the Moroccan proponents of modernist Salafism had been more forthcoming in offering definitions of the concept.) By the end of the 1990s, the opposite situation prevailed. Countless books and articles now dealt with the origins and meaning of Salafism as understood by purist Muslims. A religious periodical founded in Riyadh in 1994 illustrates this shift in focus. Not only was this new journal conveniently titled *al-Salafiyya*, but also its main objective was to explicate and promote "the concept of Salafism [*mafhūm al-salafiyya*]" while praising some of its main defenders, such as ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Baz, Nasir al-Din al-Albani, and Muhammad ibn al-ʿUthaymin.[6]

Even more significant is the novel way in which a majority of purist Salafis, including the collaborators of the journal *al-Salafiyya*, articulated the concept. Beginning in the 1970s, a process of ideologization took place whereby Muslim scholars recast purist Salafism as a totalizing system reminiscent of the Islamism of Sayyid Qutb. From being a theological doctrine and an approach to Islamic law, Salafism became a worldview that encompassed the whole of existence, from knowledge to practice, from morality to etiquette, and even from religion to politics. Salafism was now a total ideology, as defined by sociologist Daniel Bell: "A *total* ideology is an all-inclusive system of comprehensive reality, it is a set of beliefs, infused with passion, and seeks to transform the whole of a way of life."[7] The Arabic term that best encapsulates this process of ideologization is *manhaj*, or "method." Historian Bernard Haykel was the first to point out that the notion of Salafi *manhaj* is a modern development that, he stated, is "most likely associated with the teachings of Nasir al-Din al-Albani."[8]

There is no doubt that al-Albani played a major role in the dissemination of this new presentation of Salafism, but he did not coin the notion of Salafi *manhaj*, nor was he the first to theorize it. From the early 1970s onward, Mustafa Hilmi (b. 1932), an Egyptian professor of philosophy influenced by Islamist thinkers and close to the purist Salafi circles in Alexandria, took an active part in the systematization of purist Salafism

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as an ideology and a "method." More than any other scholar of the 1970s, Hilmi reframed Salafism as a comprehensive way of thinking, a blueprint for action, and an Islamic civilizational worldview. He began his work in Egypt but continued in Saudi Arabia, where, like many others, he served as a university professor between 1972 and 1980 and then again from 1987 to 1992. His stay in the kingdom briefly overlapped with that of al-Hilali, who was still in Medina when Hilmi first moved to Riyadh.

At the Service of the Saudi Religious Establishment

From 1968 to 1974, al-Hilali served as professor of Islamic faith and teachings at the Islamic University in Medina. His new employers nonetheless recognized his particular expertise in the field of linguistics. Throughout his life, he had devoted considerable time to the study and teaching of Arabic as well as other languages. These skills proved invaluable at a time when Saudi Salafis were hoping to spread their religious views around the world and reach Muslim communities whose members did not have a strong command of the Arabic language. At the Islamic University in Medina, al-Hilali was thus entrusted with the task of translating the Qurʾan into English on behalf of the Saudi religious establishment. His partner for this assignment, Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, was not a religious scholar by training. Rather, he was a Pakistani cardiologist and director of the Islamic University's clinic.[9]

Together, al-Hilali and Khan produced an important tool for the dissemination of Saudi-sponsored religious ideas across geopolitical and linguistic boundaries. Originally titled *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qurʾan*, their English translation of the revelation first came out in 1977 and went through many reeditions under different titles and in various formats. It has been so widely distributed that al-Hilali and Khan have become household names among Muslims in the West, especially in America and Britain. Yet there is some irony in the fact that al-Hilali's longstanding interest in European languages led him to translate the Qurʾan. In the 1930s, he was opposed to the idea. Although he had argued that learning foreign languages was a means to empower Muslims (especially when the languages were those of European colonial powers), he still insisted

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that proper knowledge of classical Arabic was necessary for all believers. Islamic unity depended on it, if only because mastery of the language of revelation could prevent gross textual misinterpretations that caused the emergence of heretical groups. It is worth noting that he started criticizing India's Ahmadiyya movement in 1932 because its devotees had issued an English translation of the Qurʾan.[10] He had admired their ability to preach in foreign languages, but he refused to condone their tampering with the word of God. At the time, Rashid Rida's position was relatively similar. He agreed that Muslims needed to devise ways of presenting the ideas of the Qurʾan in foreign languages but wanted translations of any part of the scriptures to remain minimal at best.[11]

Historical conditions had obviously changed by the 1970s, but the ambition and persuasiveness of Saudi religious scholars also helped to override al-Hilali's prior objections. Given how grateful he was for his privileged relationship with the kingdom's religious establishment, he did not hesitate to comply with the will of his patrons. Still, he agreed that any attempt to translate the Qurʾan would be fraught with inherent difficulties and limitations. In a Kuwaiti journal in 1971, he admitted that translations could never generate as much emotion or spur as many conversions to Islam as the original speech of God in Arabic.[12] But the real problem lay elsewhere. By translating the Qurʾan at the behest of the Saudi religious authorities, al-Hilali could hardly avoid committing the fault against which Rida had issued a warning in 1908—that a translator might "cause the reader of his translation to adopt a belief that the Qurʾan did not intend."[13]

Indeed, *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qurʾan* has been criticized for being a "Trojan-horse translation."[14] The book does, in some instances, provide readers with a characteristically severe interpretation of the revelation. The most obvious example, which Khaled Abou El Fadl aptly noted, is the way in which al-Hilali and Khan affirm that Muslim women have the obligation to cover their entire face, save the eyes, on the basis of a questionable translation of Qurʾan 24:31 and 33:59. To reach that conclusion, the translators interpolated extra-Qurʾanic details in each of these two verses in order to specify body parts that a literal reading of the text would otherwise not reveal.[15] Interestingly, al-Hilali's personal opinion on this issue, which he expressed many times in his writings until the early 1980s, was that veiled women did *not* have the obligation to cover their face.[16] Hence, one cannot help but conclude that the chief Wahhabi

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scholars of Saudi Arabia demanded that the translation conform to their own views rather than al-Hilali's.

During his tenure at the Islamic University in Medina, al-Hilali also helped Khan in the last stage of a parallel project aimed at translating al-Bukhari's canonical collection of hadiths into English. Prepared under the auspices of the Saudi religious establishment, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari* conveys an equally purist presentation of Islam that revolves around rigid prescriptions and proscriptions. The introduction, glossary, appendixes, and comments inserted throughout the nine volumes warn English-speaking Muslims against the imminent danger of straying into disbelief (*kufr*) and against the dangers of engaging in polytheism (*shirk*) and hypocrisy (*nifāq*), which await anyone who fails to abide by an exacting Salafi conception of *tawḥīd*. In that sense, the book does more than provide translations of sound hadiths. Like *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qurʾan*, it offers a Salafi interpretive framework and presents readers with a simplified, unyielding exposé of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. The text makes it clear that polytheists and disbelievers, as defined by the translators and their patrons, are beyond the pale of Islam.

There is no question that these two works were meant to complement each other in supporting a broader campaign of Salafi proselytism. Incidentally, both include the same certificate of authentication signed by Ibn Baz, confirming that al-Hilali and Khan worked together on the two projects while they were employed at the Islamic University in Medina.[17] Some editions of the books also include the same addenda, for which no justification is provided, though the publisher's decision to print them suggests ulterior motives. One of them, which is found in both *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qurʾan* and *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari*, is the abridged and modified English version of a study that al-Hilali prepared in 1973 to arm one of his disciples in the United States with arguments against Christian critics of Islam. In both the Arabic and the English versions of this study, originally titled *al-Barāhīn al-injīliyya ʿalā anna ʿĪsā ʿalayhi al-salām dākhil fī-l-ʿubūdiyya wa lā ḥaẓẓ lahu fī-l-ulūhiyya* (Evangelical proofs that Jesus is a servant of God and has absolutely no divine status), the crux of the argument is that Christianity is an untenable religion.[18] The study examines many passages from the Gospel, especially the Gospel of Matthew, and contends that the doctrine of the incarnation is illogical and blasphemous.

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There is, of course, nothing exceptional about al-Hilali's refutation of Christianity: interreligious polemics had been a staple of reformist literature throughout the twentieth century. Rida, for one, had dealt with this subject at length.[19] But there is a significant difference in how al-Hilali and his former mentor approached the subject. Rida's criticism of Christianity was, in large measure, a modernist one. Despite his propensity to write polemical statements, he did not attack Christianity merely for being theologically flawed; rather, he advanced arguments that questioned the "adequacy" of the Gospel in the early twentieth century.[20] The blind acceptance of the ungraspable doctrine of the Trinity, according to Rida, stifled the minds and flew in the face of rational inquiry. As a result, he saw Christianity as a morally and socially counterproductive force that contradicted Muslim reformers' efforts to overcome lethargy, nonage, and colonialism.[21] In the 1970s, however, al-Hilali seemed to have had no objective other than to undermine Christianity by noting textual inconsistencies and formulating theological refutations informed by Islamic beliefs. Christians were wrong and needed to be branded as disbelievers, he argued, because they attributed a divine status to a prophet—namely, Jesus.[22] We find this rather narrow and scripturalist approach in the rest of al-Hilali's intellectual production as well.

Why did modernist concerns disappear almost entirely from his writings? In part, this was the price of success. Although still imperfect, the condition of the *umma* had undoubtedly improved since the early twentieth century. Colonialism had been nearly completely defeated, and independent Muslim states had been established. Western technological knowledge was within reach. Islamic education had been reformed in various countries, and teaching methods had been "modernized." Believers could claim to be both Muslim and modern at the same time despite persisting debates about the meaning of these terms. In short, many of the basic goals of early twentieth-century balanced reform—the goals that al-Hilali considered most important—had been achieved. Unlike other Islamic activists, he did not think there was a need to go further or raise expectations. Therefore, of all the facets that characterized his reformist discourse between the 1920s and 1980s, Salafism was the only one that did not fade away. The quest for pure Islam—the key to greater happiness in this world and the next—would continue until religious truth prevailed everywhere. For al-Hilali, this quest filled the vacuum created by the

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relative successes of balanced reform. It came to permeate his thinking and made his agenda appear one-dimensional rather than multifaceted. Reform, for him, now consisted in beating the drums of Salafi orthodoxy and orthopraxy—and nothing more (except perhaps the purification of the Arabic language, which was inextricably linked to the proper understanding of religious texts).

Al-Hilali's career in Saudi Arabia also seems to have influenced his reformist thinking. Forty years after his initial stay in the country, he finally received the esteem he had always wanted. The Islamic University in Medina conferred upon him a certain religious authority, offered him exposure, and gave him a new sense of purpose. An ambitious man even in his seventies and eighties, he was not about to jeopardize his new status. Instead, he sought to please his new patrons as much as possible by praising the Saudi state, its government, and its religious establishment. In doing so, he implied that promoting Islamic modernism was no longer necessary. In a talk he gave in Medina in 1969, he extolled King Faysal for ruling according to the Qurʾan and the Sunna and for having spread security and prosperity "to an extent never before seen in the world."[23] Saudi Arabia was even safer than Nazi Germany, al-Hilali claimed, thereby admitting that he continued to admire the Third Reich and still regarded it as the epitome of European power. He boasted that Westerners finally acknowledged the strength of the Saudi kingdom, and he recounted an anecdote to illustrate this point. In 1957, while on his way to the pilgrimage onboard a Swiss Air flight, he had spoken to a stewardess who was busy making sure that no alcohol would be consumed once the aircraft entered Saudi airspace. She had told him that the pilot and the entire crew were afraid of Saudi authorities, for the latter showed no leniency toward people who appeared to be drunk. That, for al-Hilali, was a source of great pride. It constituted proof that Saudi Arabia stood in no need of further social or political reforms. It already possessed the power it deserved and commanded respect from the most developed countries in the West.

Outside of the Saudi kingdom, however, serious problems persisted. In the same talk he gave in 1969, al-Hilali complained about the appeal of Arab socialism, democracy, and the Western liberal concept of freedom in other parts of the Middle East—themes that he otherwise rarely addressed in the last two decades of his life. But he did not offer any sustained or profound reflection on these issues. The main point of his talk, titled *Progress and*

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Regress (*al-Taqaddum wa-l-rajʿiyya*), was that the two concepts were relative and that, regardless of what Westerners might think or say, Islam offered the best and most ethical system of economic, social, and political organization, which Saudi Arabia embodied. For good measure, he continued to present Islam as the religion of reason, but by this, he meant that one had to be foolish not to recognize Islam's superiority to all other belief systems. In reality, he dismissed the approach of past balanced reformers who elevated reason as a key criterion of truth through which the compatibility between religion and modernity could be enhanced. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, he instead strove to limit the epistemological function of reason. He maintained, for example, that a unique hadith or report (*khabar wāḥid*) yielded dependable knowledge—so dependable that it constituted a binding legal proof upon which executions and canonical punishments could be carried out.[24]

In essence, al-Hilali no longer sought to present Islam in a modern idiom or make the case for its compatibility with the social, political, and scientific standards of the West. For him, Muslims had already borrowed all they needed from an otherwise regressive Western modernity. Anything more would lead to the corruption of Islam. Furthermore, in his desire to pander to the Saudi religious establishment and further his own career, he went so far as to condone antiscientific attitudes. During the heyday of the American space program in 1965, Ibn Baz had begun publishing articles to demonstrate, on the basis of the Qurʾan and the Sunna, that heliocentrism was a false and heretical theory. He was neither the first nor the only Wahhabi scholar to propound this view, but no one matched his insistence in decrying the rotation of the earth.[25] In the scriptures, he argued, God and His Prophet made it clear that the earth stands still, whereas the sun and the moon are in movement. To claim otherwise was to accuse God of lying. He added that common sense corroborated these textual proofs: if the earth moved in space, then mountains, trees, rivers, and oceans could not remain in place, and people would see western lands move to the east, and vice versa. The direction of prayer would keep changing, too. According to Ibn Baz, then, any Muslim who propounded heliocentrism and refused to repent was an apostate who could be killed and whose property could be confiscated.[26]

The arguments he advanced are reminiscent of those advanced by the teachers at the Prophet's mosque in Medina, who, in the late 1920s,

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maintained that the earth was flat. We have seen in chapter 2 how al-Hilali, along with Rida, struggled to counter the adverse effects of such ignorance. In the 1960s, however, al-Hilali, like many other foreign religious scholars working for the Saudi religious establishment, did not dare contradict Ibn Baz on the question of heliocentrism. On the contrary, al-Hilali tried to ingratiate himself with his Saudi benefactor by volunteering to help him buttress his flawed argument. In the summer of 1968, as al-Hilali was waiting for confirmation of his appointment to the Islamic University in Medina, he wrote to Ibn Baz and assured him of his support against petty critics who denied the movement of the sun "without having ever attended a single lesson of astronomy."[27] Al-Hilali, who was no more of an astronomer, played a Machiavellian game by telling his patron what he wanted to hear. Al-Hilali knew that the heliocentric theory was correct and that the earth orbited the sun. He knew that the position of Ibn Baz contradicted basic scientific evidence. In the 1960s, al-Hilali had written extensively about *Man Does Not Stand Alone*, a defense of religion authored by the chemist and former president of the New York Academy of Sciences Abraham Cressy Morisson (d. 1951). This book, which al-Hilali regarded as a powerful piece of apologetic writing (because it showed that even top Western scientists believed in God), contained references to the fact that the earth revolves around the sun.[28] Al-Hilali never denied the veracity of these statements.

To flatter Ibn Baz, however, al-Hilali adopted an ambiguous stance and insisted that Western scientists had now confirmed the sun's movement. He had probably heard about this on the radio—presumably on the BBC—though he claimed to have found textual proofs in books of astronomy, which he said he could eventually translate from English into Arabic. But it is doubtful that he had any authoritative source at his disposal because he chose instead to write a letter to a radio station in London requesting a formal statement about the movement of the sun. The station wrote back, and the first half of its statement explained that Ibn Baz's interpretation of Qurʾan 36:38–40 was scientifically untenable: the sun does not orbit the earth. Al-Hilali told Ibn Baz to disregard this comment, alleging that the radio station's spokesperson was no master of the Qurʾanic text. But the second half of the statement confirmed what al-Hilali had heard: it mentioned that the sun *does* move in space at a speed of about 46,800 miles per hour. He gladly reported the information to Ibn Baz and noted that,

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whereas Western scientists had a habit of changing their mind about the cosmos, the Qurʾan was always right.[29]

The information provided by the British radio station was indeed considered accurate at the time, as can be gauged from scientific publications aimed at the general public between the 1940s and 1960s.[30] Nevertheless, Western astronomers were not replacing the heliocentric paradigm with a geocentric one by stating that the sun moved in space; they were merely specifying that the entire solar system, including the sun, moved at a speed of 46,800 miles per hour relative to nearby star systems. None of this could be used to debunk heliocentrism—a detail that al-Hilali kept from Ibn Baz. Such a piece of information was all the more pointless because Ibn Baz had already declared that anyone who claimed that both the sun and the earth moved in space was also an unbeliever (*kāfir*).[31]

Evidently, al-Hilali now had few incentives to present Islam as the religion that could best foster scientific and civilizational progress. In principle, he would not have claimed otherwise. A few years earlier in the mid-1960s, he was still writing articles arguing that Islam encourages the development of science and technology.[32] But in practice, the lure of prestige and money from the Saudi religious establishment prompted him to step back from the idea of balanced reform. Unwilling to put his professional future at risk, he went on with the charade of geocentrism.

The Return Home

Although he lived and worked in possibly the most favorable environment for purist Salafis, al-Hilali left Saudi Arabia in 1974 and moved back to his native country. Morocco became his home base for the last thirteen years of his life. The standard explanation for his departure from the Islamic University of Medina is that he lacked the necessary leisure to answer the call of his Moroccan disciples, who wanted him to return to that country and spread the purist version of Salafism.[33] The details surrounding this episode are unclear, but his repatriation should not be construed as a sign of failure. There is little indication that his relationship with the Saudi religious establishment suffered as a result of his retirement from the Islamic University. On the contrary, he remained close to the Wahhabi ʿulama in general and to Ibn Baz in particular. But it is possible that al-Hilali worried

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about being forgotten, which may explain why he sometimes went out of his way to signify his continued admiration for Ibn Baz.[34] In any case, sources suggest that al-Hilali stayed in the good graces of Saudi authorities for the remainder of his life.

Upon his return to Morocco in 1974, al-Hilali settled once again in the city of Meknes. Politically, the situation was quite different, for significant events had shaken the Moroccan regime during his absence. Chief among them were the two failed coups of 1971 and 1972, which ushered in a period of political stultification and repression. The religious field, however, remained as diversified and fragmented as before. The Palace continued to support beliefs and practices that contradicted the ideals of purist Salafism: Morocco's official Islam still drew heavily on the Maliki school of law, the Ashʿari creed, and Sufism, all of which al-Hilali vehemently opposed.[35] Nevertheless, Moroccan authorities appear to have welcomed his apolitical stance and Saudi connections, which could help counteract the influence of leftist oppositional groups (and, after 1979, the appeal of the Islamic revolution in Iran). Senior government officials reportedly knew about his return and approved of his giving religious lessons in mosques.[36] His struggle on behalf of the pure Islam of the pious ancestors thus continued unabated.

The publication of al-Hilali's own Qurʾanic exegesis was a milestone in this respect. Titled *Sabīl al-rashād* (The path of right conduct), it first came out in 1979–1980 as a two-volume set and was reissued a few years later in a three-volume edition, which the Saudi Cultural Bureau in Rabat distributed for free. Princess Jawhara bint Saʿud, one of the daughters of the late King Saʿud of Saudi Arabia, covered the cost of this second edition.[37] Of particular relevance here is the selective, thematic nature of this exegesis. Al-Hilali never intended to comment on each sura and each verse of the Qurʾan. Instead, he concentrated on passages relating to *tawḥīd*—a concept he now subdivided into four types. In addition to the two types expounded by Ibn Taymiyya in the medieval period—namely, *tawḥīd* of lordship (*al-rubūbiyya*) and *tawḥīd* of worship (*al-ʿibāda*, also known as *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*)—al-Hilali emphasized *tawḥīd* of divine names and attributes (*al-asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*), as did Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab in the eighteenth century and many Salafis after him. By this, they referred to the obligation of Muslims to abide by the Salafi creed in interpreting the divine attributes. Anyone who failed to describe God as He described Himself and as the Prophet described Him (in accordance with neo-Hanbali theology) was, therefore, guilty of

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compromising God's unicity. But al-Hilali went even further and added an unusual fourth type of *tawḥīd*: that of adherence (*al-ittibāʿ*), by which he meant adhering to the Qurʾan and the Sunna.[38]

By dividing the notion of God's unicity into four branches and by putting each of them on a par with the fundamental belief that God is one, al-Hilali armed himself with a powerful means of intimidation. An expanded notion of *tawḥīd* gave him more opportunities to accuse other Muslims of *shirk* (polytheism), the most serious sin in Islam's monotheistic tradition. And indeed the pages of *Sabīl al-rashād* are filled with religious warnings and accusations. The book goes to great length to expose the enemies of Islam: depraved individuals (*mufsidīn*), sinners (*mujrimīn*), unbelievers (*kuffār*), and, of course, polytheists (*mushrikīn*). This last category, he explained, included those who pretend to be Muslims but are in fact polytheists because of their noncompliance with the standards of pure Islam.[39] As usual, he argued that all polytheists might escape their vile condition if they hear the truth and choose to repent. (In a different book, al-Hilali acknowledged that he was himself a polytheist when he belonged to the Tijaniyya Sufi order until the early 1920s.[40]) His Qurʾanic exegesis thus enjoined misguided individuals to recant and embrace true Islam, or else they would burn in the lowest part of hell.[41]

But what if they did not recant? What might happen in this world to a sane but misguided Muslim who hears the truth and yet refuses to repent? Al-Hilali provided clues in some of his other writings. Quoting a long passage from the work of Ibn Hazm (d. 1064) and relying on the Sunna, he asserted, for instance, that anyone who intentionally fails to pray at the appropriate time deserves to be struck and given a warning. But a wrongdoer who refuses to obey the rule without a valid excuse and despite having received a warning is an unbeliever, a polytheist, and an apostate whose blood and possessions become lawful spoil (*ḥalāl al-damm wa-l-māl*).[42] This opinion was out of tune with the sensibilities of many Moroccan Muslims who followed the Maliki school of law and would not have thought of hurling such verbal condemnations. In al-Hilali's mind, however, the time for intra-Islamic tolerance had long passed. Thus, when a young girl visited him in Meknes and confessed that her sister was an unbeliever (*kāfira*) because she no longer prayed, he told her that Islam required her not to love or interact with her sister until the latter repented. He further warned the girl that she should honor the tie of kinship (*ṣilat al-raḥim*) only if her

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unbeliever sister needed assistance. This particular ruling, which he boldly repeated more than once, caused dismay within the community. He made no secret of the fact that he was accused of harshness and exaggeration because of it. But he dismissed these criticisms, claiming that truth was on his side. He told his detractors to read what Ibn Kathir had written about this issue in the fourteenth century and quoted reports from the Prophet and the Companions to confirm the validity of his view.[43]

Such was al-Hilali's conception of reform during the last years of his life. Strictly speaking, it covered only one aspect of Rida's old multifaceted program—that which early twentieth-century activists called religious reform (*al-islāḥ al-dīnī*), as distinguished from social, political, or educational reform. Even more importantly, this religious reform had become disengaged from the modernist concerns of previous decades. In other words, it is not so much that purist Salafism determined al-Hilali's understanding of religious reform (this was not entirely new) but rather that this reform was no longer balanced by modernist ideals. This helps explain why virtually all of his publications beginning in the 1970s dealt with details of orthopraxy and orthodoxy, from correct time, movements, and utterances of prayer to the errors and delusions of the Tabligh movement.[44] He presented his views as factual, unprocessed, and objective renditions of the truth. In many instances, he merely provided a numbered list of proof texts: Qurʾanic verses, hadiths, and commentaries of medieval authorities revered by purist Salafis. In other cases, he reproduced entire sections of books written by trustworthy scholars of the past. His own input was otherwise minimal.

Here lies another fundamental difference with prior conceptions of Islamic reform. Earlier in the twentieth century, it was common for balanced reformers to invoke public interest, to think in utilitarian terms, and to discuss notions of progress and the common good to justify the need for change in the modern era. Al-Hilali had practiced this style of intellectual inquiry himself to some extent. But this was no longer the case. In the late twentieth century, purist Salafis like al-Hilali were content to simply present their understanding of Islam as an ahistorical and indisputable normative system. On the question of women's honor, for example, al-Hilali deemed it sufficient to argue that good things would happen if women covered their head and neck, if strict gender segregation was enforced in every situation, and if women did not imitate men. After listing scriptural evidence, he drove his point home by sharing the written testimony of a

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Muslim woman whom God had punished with a terrible sickness because she had flaunted her beauty (*tabarruj*). When she abandoned this behavior and began to wear the veil, God miraculously cured her.[45] Al-Hilali offered no further rationale for modesty.

The Religious Broker of Casablanca

A change occurred in the early 1980s, around the time when this booklet about female honor came out. For reasons that are not clear, al-Hilali moved out of Meknes and resettled in Casablanca. According to Muhammad ibn Saᶜd al-Shuwayᶜir, a Saudi religious scholar who knew both al-Hilali and Ibn Baz personally (and who sometimes acted as an intermediary between the two), it was Ibn Baz who suggested the move and pledged to support his Moroccan colleague financially. But al-Shuwayᶜir is vague concerning the reason behind this relocation: he simply mentions that circumstances befell al-Hilali. In Morocco, I have heard various stories from informants, some claiming that he relocated to Casablanca because of health concerns and others insisting that he felt isolated or uncomfortable in Meknes. All of these explanations are plausible. Given the intensity of his convictions, it would not be surprising that he moved out of Meknes as a result of religious controversies. But he may also have moved for medical reasons. After all, he had been suffering from malaria, asthma, stomach ulcers, and blindness for many years, and he was now well into his eighties. In any event, he managed to resume his activities in Morocco's largest city. He had a villa in the upscale Polo neighborhood of Casablanca, which Ibn Baz had purchased for him. He had a chauffeur, his house was always filled with visitors, he had devoted followers and students, he dictated articles for various religious magazines, and he gave sermons and lessons in the mosques of the city's popular neighborhoods, including ᶜAyn Shuq.[46]

The rare photos of al-Hilali dating from this period are telling evidence that he openly embraced a purist conception of Salafism influenced by Saudi religious norms. We have already mentioned that he had long refused to grow a beard and that, until at least the late 1950s, his official picture in the journal *Daᶜwat al-Haqq* showed him clean shaven and dressed in formal Western attire. At the time of his employment at the Islamic University in Medina, however, he ceased to minimize the Sunna of etiquette

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(*ādāb*) relating to facial hair and clothing.[47] Although he did not think that one's refusal to grow a beard constituted a major sin, he no longer deemed the matter optional. He now believed that imitating the Prophet was a religious obligation incumbent on all Muslims. Al-Hilali thus came to the conclusion that he should not try to interpret the hadiths relating to *ādāb* but should merely abide by their rules so as to become a role model and appear consistent with his call to Salafism.[48] Hence, two pictures published with his obituary in the Moroccan journal *al-Furqan* reveal an old man who had dramatically changed in his appearance. Taken in 1980 during a trip to India with the Saudi imam of the holy mosque of Mecca, the pictures show al-Hilali bearded and wearing an overcoat (*bisht*) and a checkered scarf (*shumāgh*) on his head. In keeping with the practice of Wahhabi scholars and many purist Salafis, he did not wear a black cord (*ʿiqāl*) around his headdress to hold it in place. Although Wahhabi scholars do not forbid the use of the *ʿiqāl*, it is customary among them and their religious students to refrain from wearing one.[49]

In Morocco, this new persona could not go unnoticed. Often branded as a Wahhabi, al-Hilali's presence evidently disturbed Moroccans who regarded his brand of Islam and his Saudi connections with suspicion. Even today, rumors abound that he was part of a Saudi fifth column. One example will suffice. In 2003, ʿUmar Wajaj Ayt Musa, then head of the refurbished version of the Islamist organization al-Shabiba al-Islamiyya al-Maghribiyya (the Moroccan Islamic Youth),[50] issued a communiqué declaring that Muhammad Zuhal (b. 1943), a well-known Moroccan preacher based in Casablanca, had once been recruited by al-Hilali on behalf of the Saudi intelligence service for 5,000 dirhams a month.[51] This unsubstantiated allegation lacks credibility: a former member of the Shabiba, Zuhal, like many others, was then the object of a denigration campaign.[52] It is true, however, that Zuhal was a student of al-Hilali. And because the latter was indeed close to Saudi Arabia, some people were disposed to believe that he recruited spies for Riyadh.

Although there is no evidence that al-Hilali ever worked for the Saudi intelligence service, it is undeniable that he remained a paid agent of the Saudi religious establishment. The private correspondence between him and Ibn Baz in the 1970s and 1980s confirms that Wahhabi institutions bankrolled al-Hilali and his associates, mostly in Morocco but also in countries such as France, Belgium, and India, where al-Hilali traveled regularly.

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Money is the most recurrent theme in these extant letters. Al-Hilali—himself on the Saudi payroll—often requested reimbursements and asked Ibn Baz to pay a monthly allowance or a lump sum to various religious activists, including family members, who had been teaching, proselytizing, or writing books. Ibn Baz, it seems, trusted al-Hilali's judgment and agreed to support these individuals financially, provided they were Salafi in creed. In the early 1980s, it appears that the average salary of a Saudi-sanctioned preacher operating in Morocco was 1,000 Saudi riyal a month, or about 2,500 Moroccan dirhams. Given the difficulties of transferring funds from Saudi Arabia to Morocco, al-Hilali would sometimes bring back some of that money when he had an opportunity to travel to Riyadh.[53]

Perhaps *religious broker* is the most fitting description of al-Hilali's role in this context. He vouched for his Salafi protégés and furthered their careers by acting as an intermediary between them and the Saudi religious establishment. Chief among these protégés was Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Maghrawi (b. 1948), the leader of al-Daʿwa ila al-Qurʾan wa-l-Sunna (the Call to the Qurʾan and the Sunna), Morocco's foremost purist Salafi association. Born near al-Rashidiyya in the Tafilalt—al-Hilali's native region—al-Maghrawi moved to Meknes to pursue Islamic studies at an institute affiliated to the Qarawiyyin. He then studied at the Ibn Yusuf Institute in Marrakesh, where he also served as a primary and secondary school teacher. But in addition to his formal studies, he attended the lessons of al-Hilali, who eventually recommended him and secured his admission to the Islamic University in Medina. This was arguably the defining moment of al-Maghrawi's professional life. In Saudi Arabia, he studied under the likes of Ibn Baz, Abu Bakr Jabir al-Jazaʾiri, and Hammad al-Ansari. When he returned to Morocco, he settled in Marrakesh and obtained Saudi support to found his pietistic association in 1976. He then established a network of Salafi learning centers named Houses of the Qurʾan (*dūr al-qurʾān*), of which there are now dozens of branches all over Morocco.[54]

Probably only a few people and organizations benefited from al-Hilali's influence in such a way, but the effectiveness of his connections was clear enough. Moreover, in addition to being a religious broker, he became a regional manager. Not only did he distribute pro-Salafi books on behalf of the Saudi religious establishment; he also managed a Moroccan budget on behalf of Ibn Baz. One letter from al-Hilali to Ibn Baz dating from June 1984 speaks of a Saudi grant of 140,000 dirhams (about $16,000 at the time),

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possibly to cover expenses for a period of three months. It was a considerable sum, which al-Hilali had to allocate to various individuals, including himself. (He claimed a share of 25,000 dirhams.) But he seemed unwilling to make budgetary decisions without Ibn Baz's consent. For example, he wondered whether an equal amount should be given to every Moroccan preacher on the payroll and whether the grant money should be used to pay all of these salaries or should be used for other purposes. "I am waiting for your orders," he wrote to Ibn Baz.[55]

All this goes to show that al-Hilali continued to live in symbiosis with the Saudi ʿulama despite his return home. His polemical attitude toward Moroccan Islam and his purist views, now fully in line with those of top Saudi scholars, made additional waves that contributed to his reputation as a suspicious outsider. If we are to believe one of his former students, al-Hilali was quick-tempered and liable to terrible fits of rage whenever his interlocutors defended "polytheist" ideas.[56] Some of his detractors thus started referring to him as *Shaqi* al-Din instead of Taqi al-Din (*shaqī* meaning "mischievous" in Arabic).[57] In some ways, he must still have felt an outcast in his own country, as he had in the late 1950s and 1960s. But this time, emboldened by the financial and moral support of the Saudi religious establishment, he did not mind becoming a bête noire for traditional Moroccan Muslims.

Salafism: From Doctrine to Method

From the 1970s onward, Salafism became not only a ubiquitous concept in the literature of purist Salafis and their critics but also an ideology in its own right. This development was consistent with the growing popularity of Islamism, or "Islamic totalism," which William Shepard has defined as "the tendency to view Islam not merely as a 'religion' in the narrow sense of theological belief, private prayer and ritual worship, but also as a total way of life with guidance for political, economic, and social behavior."[58] For all their insistence on preserving the purity of Islam, purist Salafis were not entirely impervious to the intellectual fashions of the day. The Muslim thinkers who most captured people's imagination at the time came not from the ranks of the purist Salafis but rather from the ranks of the Islamists, known for their more practical and exciting approach

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to sociopolitical reform. A trendsetter such as Sayyid Qutb was still immensely influential in the wake of his execution in 1966. So, too, were the critical, ideological, and all-encompassing views of other Islamists.

A word of caution is in order here. To speak of Islamist influence on Salafis, or vice versa, implies a conceptual division that crystallized only during the last quarter of the twentieth century. By all accounts, Islamism was on the rise in the 1970s, even in the Arabian Peninsula. The presence in Saudi Arabia of thousands of exiled Muslim Brothers, mainly from Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, had major consequences and facilitated the cross-pollination of ideas.[59] As a result, a number of purist Salafis began to insist on distinguishing themselves from Islamists, who, they thought, were too focused on politics and guilty of too many religious errors, especially in theology. Al-Albani, for example, frequently separated Salafis from Islamists (*islāmiyyīn*) during the 1980s and 1990s.[60] Since then, Salafi criticisms of figures such as Hasan al-Banna, Abu al-Aᶜla al-Mawdudi, and Qutb, to name but the most famous, have become commonplace. But to this day, there are plenty of borderline cases where it is difficult to draw a clear line between purist Salafis and Islamists—a typological problem with which both scholars of Islam and Islamic scholars have had to grapple. A fortiori, the lines of division were even less clear in the 1970s, when purist Salafis were under less pressure to make such distinctions. Given also the "Salafization" of the Muslim Brothers, as the late Egyptian researcher Husam Tammam put it, distinctions were often hard to make.[61]

It was in this context that the notion of Salafi *manhaj* (usually translated as "method" or "methodology") gained ground. One scholar who played a pivotal role in this process was Mustafa Hilmi, an Egyptian professor of philosophy born in Alexandria in 1932. A product of late colonial Egypt, he grew up in a rather eclectic intellectual climate. In primary and secondary school, he learned some English and French, which he would later use for research. In 1960, he received a *license ès lettres*, or undergraduate degree, from the University of Alexandria, where he also completed a master's degree in 1967 and a doctorate in 1971, all of them in philosophy. At the same time, Hilmi—a devoted Muslim—proved receptive to the message of preachers affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and became an activist himself, though it is not clear whether he formally belonged to any Islamist organization.[62] Along with other Muslim scholars from various backgrounds, he attended the scholarly gathering of Muhammad Rashad

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Ghanim (d. 1992), a merchant of silverware and antiques with an impressive personal library and close connections to the Salafi leaders of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.[63] Through him, Hilmi took a keen interest in Ibn Taymiyya and gradually came to adopt Salafi theology.

In the 1960s, however, Hilmi was still too fascinated by the rationalism of philosophy to consider traditional Islamic science as a possible field of specialization. Yet even as a graduate student of philosophy, he focused on topics that betrayed his affinities with Islamist thought. His master's thesis, written under the supervision of the Cambridge-educated Ashʿari scholar ʿAli Sami al-Nashshar (d. 1980), dealt with political theory and discussed the religiously sanctioned notion of leadership (*imāma*) in Islamic intellectual history from the time of the Prophet to the abolition of the caliphate in 1924. The revised version of this thesis, published ten years later in 1977, suggests that Hilmi was already thinking of Islam as an ideology competing with rival systems of thought.[64] His yearning for an ideal Islamic state, his insistence on Islamic culture, and his ideological attacks against Zionism and against both the traditional colonialism of the past and the intellectual colonialism of the present—or cultural invasion (*al-ghazw al-thaqāfī*), which referred to the spread of secularism and other Western ways of thinking—were all characteristic of the Islamist ideology that flourished at the time. (Conversely, these were all themes that full-fledged purist Salafis, like al-Hilali, had started to deemphasize.) Hilmi not only saw Islam as a sociopolitical system (*niẓām*), as Islamists did, but also sought to identify the method (*manhaj*) by which Muslim scholars arrived at the truth about this system and about its implementation.[65]

It would be fair to say that *manhaj* had become something of a buzzword in Egyptian academia by the 1960s. There is nothing surprising, then, in the fact that Hilmi adopted it. Al-Nashshar, his supervisor, had been using it since the 1940s, and so had his supervisor before him, the great philosopher Mustafa ʿAbd al-Raziq (d. 1947).[66] To speak of method was to speak of intellectual rigor and coherence in a scientific idiom—no doubt a useful term for Arab scholars working in the humanities at modern institutions modeled after Western universities. The word *manhaj*, therefore, became a leitmotiv of Egyptian academics, but its popularity soon extended to Islamist circles as well, in large part due to Qutb's influence. Qutb had trained as a literary critic during his secularist or pre-Islamist phase, and

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his major academic work was *al-Naqd al-adabī: uṣūluhu wa manāhijuhu* (Literary criticism: its principles and methods), published in 1947. As the title of the book indicates, he was thoroughly familiar with the notion of *manhaj* employed in academia. He even described his own critical approach to literature as a comprehensive method (*manhaj takāmulī*).[67] The term later resurfaced in his Islamist writings, where he used it in a slightly different way to convey the practical and systemic nature of Islam as an ideology.[68] Most Egyptian Islamists followed suit. The books of Muhammad Qutb (d. 2014), Sayyid's younger brother, constitute a prime example. They are filled with mentions of an "all-encompassing Islamic method" and other *manhaj*-related expressions that his sibling had popularized.[69]

As a philosopher-activist, Hilmi did for Salafi thought what Sayyid Qutb had done for Islamist thought—conceptually at least. In a fashion typical of the 1960s and 1970s, Hilmi adopted the Muslim Brothers' combative intellectual attitude and totalizing critique of Western civilization to reframe Salafism as an all-encompassing religious ideology comparable to Islamism. The key to this transformation was the notion of Salafi *manhaj*, which had both theoretical and practical implications. Hilmi described it as a method of investigation that provided irrefutable knowledge for all aspects of life (e.g., a Salafi epistemology) as well as a way of putting Salafi knowledge into practice. In other words, the Salafi *manhaj* was both the surest path and the way one should walk it.

Soon after completing his doctoral dissertation on Ibn Taymiyya's views of Sufism, Hilmi became professor of philosophy at Dar al-ʿUlum, the teachers' college affiliated with the University of Cairo, where al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb had both studied. This situation lasted less than a year, however, for in 1972 Hilmi accepted a second position at the University of Riyadh (now King Saʿud University). It was between Egypt and Saudi Arabia that he started working on the book in which he first fleshed out his conceptualization of Salafism as an ideology. Appropriately titled *Qawāʿid al-manhaj al-salafī* (Rules of the Salafi method), it was originally published in 1976 and was the result of Hilmi's close reading of Henri Laoust's opus on Ibn Taymiyya. In French, Laoust's *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taki-d-Din Ahmad b. Taimiya* (Essay on the social and political doctrines of Ibn Taymiyya) dated from 1939, but Hilmi had never considered writing about it until a fellow Egyptian scholar translated the book into Arabic in the mid-1970s and asked him to add scholarly commentaries. Hilmi agreed

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but soon discovered he had too many things to say. Therefore, he also wrote two introductions—one for each volume of the Arabic translation—totaling nearly 180 pages.[70] The first of these was immediately republished as a separate book titled *Rules of the Salafi Method*, which has since been reedited several times with substantial additions.[71]

In this book, Hilmi warned his readers against Laoust's analysis of Islam. He claimed the French Orientalist was wrong about various issues, ranging from the goals of the early Islamic conquests to the status of protected people (*dhimmīs*) in Islamic history. Worse, Laoust's 1939 *Essai* provided a skewed account of Ibn Taymiyya's significance by failing to discuss certain aspects of his thought, suggesting that contradictions existed in his work, and comparing his political ideas with those of Western thinkers. In reality, Laoust was largely sympathetic to Ibn Taymiyya, but Hilmi urged his readers to be mindful of the connection between Orientalism and colonialism. Hence, Hilmi's book was an effort to liberate Muslim minds from Orientalism, first by presenting true Islam—or Salafism—as a superior and comprehensive program for life and then by portraying Ibn Taymiyya as a flawless, organic intellectual on whose guidance modern Muslims could rely to escape the influence of Western culture.

Overall it is evident that Hilmi considered himself a Salafi in creed by the mid-1970s. His *Rules of the Salafi Method* identified the doctrine of the forefathers (*madhhab al-salaf*) as the original fideist theology from which all other sects and theological schools later deviated. The Kharijis, the Shiʿis, the Muʿtazilis, and the Ashʿaris, he claimed, all broke away from the truth from the seventh century onward. But because Hilmi approached Salafism from the perspective of the humanities, his style of analysis and the type of claims he made were more akin to Islamist literature than to Salafi scholarship. He explained, for example, that Salafi theology mattered because it had to become the ideological foundation of the *homo islamicus* in lieu of nationalism or the imitation of non-Muslim civilization.[72] Creed, here, obviously meant more than a mere set of beliefs in God, the Prophet, and the unseen.

Although quite explicit on questions of Islamic theology and heresiology, Hilmi's *Rules of the Salafi Method* was vague about legal matters. Hilmi did not clearly explain what it meant to be a Salafi in law, especially in the original 1976 version of the book, though he specified that the only correct form of *ijtihād*—that of Ibn Taymiyya—was to surrender to the scriptures

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(*yakhḍaʿu li-l-nuṣūṣ*). Only Muslims influenced by the West, he said, would think of *ijtihād* as a means of dominating the scriptures and twisting their meaning to justify certain views. On this issue, he did not hesitate to condemn latter-day rationalists who wished to subdue Islamic law to the requirements of the modern age and even accused ʿAbduh and Rida of having paved the way for this tendency.[73] As it turns out, the first rule of the Salafi method that Hilmi laid down was to give priority to revelation over reason—a rule that had to be applied in both theology and law. The second and somewhat redundant rule was to reject the allegorical interpretation of speculative theologians. The third and final rule was to draw conclusions from Qurʾanic verses.

More important than the actual set of rules is the section of the book that Hilmi devoted to discussing the features of Salafism in the modern period, starting with its comprehensiveness (*shumūl*). In his own words, "Salafism became an all-inclusive technical term designating the way of the *salaf* in grasping and applying Islam [*madlūl al-salafiyya aṣbaḥa iṣṭilāḥan jāmiʿan yuṭlaqu ʿalā ṭarīqat al-salaf fī talaqqī al-islām wa fahmihi wa taṭbīqihi*]."[74] With this definition came a critique of the modern compartmentalization of life, which, at best, relegated religion to the private sphere. This spiritual poverty, combined with the frequent patchwork of secular ideologies that had some people embracing, say, democracy in the political sphere and Marxism in the economic sphere, was the object of Hilmi's scorn. Far superior to all Western ways of life was Salafism, understood as a civilizational worldview (*taṣawwur*) and divine method (*manhaj rabbānī*)—two eminently Qutbist expressions.[75] According to Hilmi, this method contained all the necessary principles for organizing the social, economic, and political aspects of life. He thus subsumed Ibn Taymiyya's views on politics under the label *Salafism*.

To push the ideologization process even further, Hilmi also couched the concept in terms of values and identity. Chief among his concerns was the defense of Salafism as a progressive worldview—more progressive in fact than any Western ideology. Here, he followed in the footsteps of various Muslim intellectuals by outlining an Islamic notion of progress based not on innovation (or liberation from the ancients) but rather on the emulation of the early Islamic community. Salafism was thus progressive and forward-looking, he maintained, but not in the Western sense because secularization and the decline of religion in Europe could not count as

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progress. Likewise, Salafism was rational but not in the Western sense. For Hilmi, sound reason was able to recognize the perfection of Islam and, ultimately, the perfection of the Salafi method. But these specifically non-Western understandings of progress and reason were constitutive not only of an all-encompassing Islamic method and worldview but also of an Islamic culture (*thaqāfa islāmiyya*). In Hilmi's book, Salafism thus became the utmost expression of Islamic cultural authenticity (*aṣāla*), a notion he borrowed not from purist Salafi scholars but from Egyptian thinkers with links to the Muslim Brotherhood such as Muhammad Jalal Kishk and Anwar al-Jundi.[76] Hilmi also acknowledged that he built on the works of other Islamists, including Sayyid Qutb, ʿAbd al-Qadir ʿAwda, and Muhammad al-Ghazali (all of whom had links to the Muslim Brotherhood) as well as Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi (al-Hilali's former student from India).[77]

For all these reasons, Hilmi's *Rules of the Salafi Method* stood out as an eclectic essay. Apart from some sections on theology, his approach did not resemble the dry scripturalism of mainstream purist Salafis, nor was it governed by a desire to avoid innovations or impurities, broadly conceived. Despite his insistence on Islamic authenticity, he had no qualms about using modern categories and a nontraditional lexicon to rearticulate Salafism. In subsequent years, this process of construing Salafism as a total ideology did not abate. His second book on the subject came out in 1983. Titled *al-Salafiyya bayna al-ʿaqīda al-islāmiyya wa-l-falsafa al-gharbiyya* (Salafism between Islamic creed and Western philosophy), the book was published by Dar al-Daʿwa in Alexandria, a press owned by top members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and has been reedited several times. In this book, Hilmi rehashed many of the themes he had previously developed in *Rules of the Salafi Method* about the inherent progressiveness and rationality of Salafism, the evils of Orientalism, and the perfection of the Salafi method vis-à-vis all Western philosophical doctrines. But this time he relied on a broader range of secondary literature, from the Arabic translation of Bertrand Russell's *A History of Western Philosophy* to the Arabic translation of Henry D. Aiken's *Age of Ideology*. Consequently, he proved eager to attack additional Western philosophies. Marxism and the positivism of Auguste Comte were among his new targets.

As its title suggests, however, the main contribution of *Salafism Between Islamic Creed and Western Philosophy* was to differentiate between an Islamic and an allegedly Western conception of Salafism in hopes of defending the

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former. What Hilmi had in mind was not the difference between purist and modernist conceptualizations of Salafism. Rather, he offered a new perspective: he now defined Salafism not as a specifically Islamic ideology but as a universal one that, according to him, had also developed in Europe. Citing the translated work of British historian Arnold Toynbee, Hilmi insisted that the expression "Salafism" was indeed found in the writings of Western thinkers.[78] But this perspective stemmed from a mistaken interpretation of what Toynbee had said. In the Arabic translation of Toynbee's *A Study of History*, Futurism and Archaism (his famous pair of opposing categories) were rendered as *mustaqbaliyya* and *salafiyya*, respectively.[79] Hilmi either failed to realize or preferred to ignore the fact that Toynbee's Archaism had little to do with the Islamic notion of *salafiyya*, regardless of the Egyptian translator's decision to use that term in Arabic. Likewise, Hilmi never questioned whether it was appropriate for the late Egyptian academic Yusuf Karam (d. 1959) to refer to French intellectuals Joseph de Maistre, Louis de Bonald, and Félicité de Lammenais as Salafis. In the late 1940s, Karam had chosen to translate *traditionalism* (the label under which the philosophy of these three Frenchmen is usually subsumed) as "the Salafi school [*al-madhhab al-salafī*]."[80] Without pausing to reflect on the potential pitfalls of this translation, Hilmi borrowed it and used it to affirm that Catholic Salafis did exist in the aftermath of the French Revolution.[81] For the most part, this was a false debate, but he pursued it nonetheless. He concluded that the Islamic notion of Salafism was free of all the ills contemporary Western thinkers attributed to their own version of the concept.

There was much in Hilmi's *Salafism Between Islamic Creed and Western Philosophy* to irk purist Salafis. His loose usage of Salafism as a synonym for archaism and traditionalism, his hazardous likening of creed (*ʿaqīda*) to a modern ideology (*īdiyūlūjiyā*), and his reliance on the works of both secular academics and Islamists all clashed with Salafis scholars' fetishization of purity.[82] When al-Albani was asked what he thought about a Salafi activist such as Hilmi during a question-and-answer session over the telephone, he replied with a question of his own:

Al-Albani: Is he Salafi?
Caller: Yes.
Al-Albani: Mustafa Hilmi is a Salafi?
Caller: He says he is a Salafi.

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Al-Albani: What is the evidence of his Salafism?

Caller (turning to the student next to him who had asked the question in the first place): What is the evidence of his Salafism?

Student (speaking to al-Albani): He writes about Salafism. . . . He claims to be a Salafi. He stands up for the affirmation [*ithbāt*] of the divine attributes according to the doctrine of the *salaf*, he criticizes the Ashʿaris, he attaches himself to the doctrine of the *salaf*, and he always criticizes those who constantly find fault with the *salaf*.

Al-Albani, who did not seem to know much about Hilmi, cut the conversation short: "This does not prove that he is a Salafi, my brother."[83]

To be sure, al-Albani set the bar higher than other scholars: not everyone who claimed to be a Salafi or abided by the main tenets of the Salafi creed was worthy of that name. (In this regard, much had changed since the early twentieth century.) He often repeated this warning and also voiced his disapproval of Islamists, especially members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who mixed Salafism with non-Salafi ideas and attitudes.[84] According to him, such individuals were not purist enough to be recognized as full-fledged Salafis. An intellectual like Hilmi, therefore, with his philosophical background, eclectic scholarship, and heterogeneous approach to Islam, had virtually no chance of receiving the full backing of al-Albani. At best, al-Albani could have said of Hilmi what he said of Sayyid Qutb—namely, that he was not a religious scholar (*ʿālim*) but rather a man of letters (*rajul adīb kātib*) who had not mastered the Salafi method.[85] And here was a telling paradox: the more demanding Salafi scholars became about purity in every aspect of life, the more broad, more ideological, and, therefore, more innovative their conception of Salafism had to be. By the 1980s, even al-Albani championed the idea of Salafism as a comprehensive *manhaj*, guiding all facets of a Muslim's existence—creed, worship, behavior, clothing, education, politics, and so forth. He did not use the highly philosophical language of Hilmi, and he mostly spoke of the Salafi method from an epistemological perspective—that is, as a way to arrive at the proper understanding of Islam—but he nonetheless shared Hilmi's basic view that Salafism was an all-inclusive system of thought.

For clarity's sake, it should be noted that the expression *manhaj al-salaf* was not new. Al-Albani had used it on occasion since at least the late 1960s—and possibly as early as 1954.[86] Al-Fasi had done the same in his

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private correspondence in the mid-1930s. Previous Muslim scholars had used it as well, as can be seen from a 1928 issue of Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi's journal *al-Islah*.[87] Technically speaking, therefore, neither Hilmi nor al-Albani invented the expression. What they did do was bring it to the fore and imbue it with a powerful new meaning. Whether one influenced the other, even indirectly, is unclear, but there is little doubt that Hilmi's publications on the Salafi method made something of a splash between 1976 and 1983 and thus helped popularize the ideologization of Salafism in the early stages. In 1985, the King Faysal Foundation of Saudi Arabia awarded him the prestigious and lucrative King Faysal International Prize in Islamic studies (along with two Egyptian cowinners who were also academics, had connections to Salafi circles, and taught in Saudi Arabia). Hilmi received this honor in recognition of three extraordinary research accomplishments—three books, including *Rules of the Salafi Method* and *Salafism Between Islamic Creed and Western Philosophy*.[88] However risky, his recasting of Salafism as a *manhaj* and an ideology clearly struck a chord with thinkers and self-proclaimed Salafis all over the Middle East, especially in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Many of them embraced his approach, in part or in whole, and further contributed to spreading an ideological form of Salafism.[89]

All of this was in tune with wider conceptual developments in Islamic thought in the late twentieth century. Since the 1970s, the notion of a Salafi *manhaj* has become immensely popular: virtually all Salafi scholars now use it. But why did this reformulation of Salafism prove so successful? Apart from the ability to compete with Islamists in providing a comprehensive Islamic blueprint for life, what were the advantages of describing Salafism as a method (*manhaj*), as opposed to a doctrine (*madhhab*)? Although still common, the latter expression posed some problems. The notion of *madhhab al-salaf* harkened back to the medieval period and was bound to remain a standard term for discussing creedal matters, but it proved frustrating when applied to the realm of the law. How could purist Salafis speak of an all-encompassing Salafi *madhhab* in both creed and law when in fact they maintained that the pious ancestors did not follow any specific legal school?[90] To defend their non-*madhhab* or pre-*madhhab* approach to Islamic law, purist Salafis had to either avoid the word *madhhab* altogether or suggest that Salafism was a *madhhab* without really being one, as though it was the legal school that warned Muslims against clinging to any legal school.

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Under these circumstances, the notion of *manhaj* became an ideal alternative. Purist Salafis much preferred to argue that the *salaf* followed a series of sound principles—a legal method—rather than a set doctrine.

Another problem concerned the Salafis' desire to assess the alleged purity of Muslims beyond matters of creed and law. Given the resurgence of Islamism and few incentives to engage in strategic collaboration, a growing number of Salafis wanted to distinguish true purists from dubious ones in every possible respect. The notion of *madhhab al-salaf*, however, did not provide them with enough conceptual flexibility to do so. How were purist Salafis supposed to categorize scholars and activists who heeded parts of Salafism but were not "pure" across the board? How could al-Albani, for example, refuse to recognize Hilmi as a Salafi even though the latter seemed to adhere to the creed of the *salaf*? In many cases, the term *madhhab* (in its traditional sense of legal or theological doctrine) was ill-suited to express disagreements about epistemology, politics, and other topics that fell outside the narrowly conceived domains of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Once again, the notion of Salafi *manhaj* offered the perfect solution because its applicability knew no limits.

According to a quietist like al-Albani, there was indeed a Salafi method for dealing with political questions, at the heart of which lay the principles of purification (*taṣfiyya*) and education (*tarbiyya*). He longed for the establishment of a pure Islamic state unsullied by modern and external influences, but he advocated patience rather than revolution. Before they could even consider establishing a pure Islamic government, Muslims had to purify their own religion and teach others about religious purity. Failure to give precedence to purification and education, al-Albani claimed, was a deviation from the Salafi method. Hence, he expressed his disappointment with Islamists who had embraced the Salafi method with respect to creed and thought (*yatabannūna al-manhaj al-salafī ʿaqīdatan wa fikran*) without implementing it in practice and calling others to it.[91] In other words, these Islamists were either too politicized or too obsessed with political change to be full-fledged Salafis despite appearances to the contrary.

Al-Albani found additional reasons to question the Salafism of others. Being loyal to an Islamic party or association (such as the Muslim Brotherhood, for instance) constituted factionalism (*ḥizbiyya*), which, according to him, was a deviation from the Salafi method.[92] So was the Muslim Brothers' habit of wearing Western clothes and trimming their beards—two

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arguable matters of dress and etiquette that were not necessarily regarded as being constitutive of Salafism in the mid-twentieth century.[93] On the whole, the notion of *manhaj* provided purist Salafis with a broader conceptual means to include and exclude. This is why, to this day, debates about political action tend to be couched in the language of *manhaj*. Rival Salafis have thus given al-Albani a taste of his own medicine: in 1999, Abu Qatada al-Filastini, a Jordanian radical preacher with alleged connections to al-Qaʿida, indirectly accused al-Albani of being Salafi in creed but Sufi in *manhaj*. Abu Qatada could not fathom why anyone would encourage passivity and enjoin Muslims to first establish the Islamic state in their hearts—a statement that al-Albani often repeated but that Abu Qatada considered typical of a Sufi mystic who renounces this world.[94] Others have described the so-called jihadist strand of Islamic activism as Salafi in creed and jihadist in method (*salafī al-ʿaqīda jihādī al-manhaj*) in order to assert that true Salafism requires violent action against infidels.[95] Activists who agreed on the neo-Hanbali interpretation of God's attributes and *tawḥīd* could thus signify their disagreement regarding political action.

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Outlining the Salafi method is, of course, a matter of interpretation, and, therefore, debates continue to take place over the features of this *manhaj*. What is more important from the perspective of conceptual history is how nothing could escape the scope of Salafism by the end of the twentieth century. Thanks to the process of ideologization, scholars and activists could no longer overlook any aspect of the all-inclusive Salafi method. Although al-Hilali adopted a more comprehensive vision of Salafism from the 1970s onward (as his views on dress and facial hair suggest), he never emphasized the notion of *manhaj* and did not live long enough to see its popularity soar throughout the 1990s. In any case, it is not clear where he would have stood on some of the key issues associated with the Salafi method. As an older Salafi who had established a personal rapport with various types of anticolonial activists in the age of Islamic nationalism, he did not systematically oppose politicized Muslims. As we have seen in chapter 3, throughout the mid-twentieth century he had no reason to denounce the Islamists of Egypt and South Asia, all of whom worked to reinforce Islamic identity and the *umma*'s unity against colonial encroachment.

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As it turns out, al-Hilali had been in contact with al-Banna in the 1940s, though the two never met in person. Al-Banna had written to al-Hilali in Tetouan and had asked him to become the Moroccan correspondent for *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, the eponymous journal that the Muslim Brotherhood published in Cairo between 1942 and 1948. Al-Hilali accepted the offer and wrote a few articles under a pseudonym until the British and Spanish colonial authorities discovered the stratagem and brought the collaboration to an end.[96] In his religious memoirs written nearly three decades later, in 1971, al-Hilali still lauded al-Banna's efforts, even though the latter was never a champion of Salafism. (Al-Banna's borrowing of Sufi practices and structures as well as his lack of commitment to theological purity was enough to disqualify him.[97]) Moreover, according to a prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood born in southern Iraq, al-Hilali still had a connection (*ṣila*) with members of the organization later in life.[98] As far as we can tell, he never formally joined the Muslim Brotherhood, but he appears to have been a sympathizer. Moreover, we must keep in mind that several of his students from the Nadwat al-ʿUlama collaborated with al-Mawdudi and worked for his Islamist organization, the Jamaʿat-i Islami, in India and Pakistan.[99] Their former professor does not seem to have ever criticized them for doing so.

It would be going too far to suggest that al-Hilali was a crypto-Islamist. What he truly admired about the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist organizations was their effectiveness in the field of proselytism (*daʿwa*). The rest of their activities did not pique his curiosity to the same extent. In the 1970s and 1980s, he was far too engrossed with issues of orthodoxy and orthopraxy to engage the Islamists' social, political, and economic programs. He also remained a quietist. He reaffirmed his loyalty to King Hasan II and repeatedly praised him for promoting Islam, even though such panegyrics rang hollow.[100] But it is difficult to determine with precision how al-Hilali felt about Islamists at the time. Although he did not criticize the Palace in writing, he did not criticize its challengers either. He refrained from discussing such issues. Still, all kinds of religious activists, including politicized ones, gravitated toward him. In Meknes, he attracted many students from the Islamist group al-Shabiba al-Islamiyya, who attended his lessons in local mosques and at his house. Like so many Islamists of the 1970s, these youths revered the works of Sayyid Qutb, whose teachings they combined with those of al-Hilali. They eventually came to think

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of themselves as Salafi in creed and *ḥarakī* in method (another quintessentially Qutbist adjective meaning “dynamic” or “proactive”). According to one of them, Shakib Rammal (b. 1957), there was nothing *ḥarakī* about al-Hilali, to the extent that his abstract religious lessons soon became boring.[101] But another leading ex-member of the Shabiba, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Bumarat (1958–2012), claimed that al-Hilali praised sociopolitical activism in general (*al-ʿamal al-ḥarakī*) and the activities of the Shabiba in particular.[102]

In all likelihood, al-Hilali appreciated the public face of this organization, for its members opposed Marxist students, promoted Arabization, and called for the Islamization of society. It is unclear, however, whether he knew about the other, clandestine and subversive face of the Shabiba and whether he supported the organization after King Hasan II began to crack down on it in 1975, following its alleged implication in the murder of a socialist political leader.[103] One thing is sure: al-Hilali cared more about the orthodoxy of Islamist activists than about their politics. In a 2002 interview with the London-based magazine *al-Bayan*, Muhammad Zuhal reported a conversation he had with al-Hilali in Meknes, probably in the mid-1970s. When the latter asked him about the Shabiba’s stance regarding creed, Zuhal named some of the books that he and his fellow Islamists used as sources. He mentioned, among others titles, Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab’s *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* and Ibn Taymiyya’s *al-ʿAqīda al-wāsiṭiyya*. According to Zuhal, al-Hilali rejoiced at the news and commended the Shabiba for its reliance on sound literature. When the interviewer from *al-Bayan* then asked about rumors to the effect that al-Hilali had censured the Shabiba’s organizational (*tanẓīmī*) structure, Zuhal denied that the old Moroccan Salafi considered this an innovation. Rather, Zuhal claimed that the majority of the members of the Shabiba visited al-Hilali and that the latter never criticized the group or its operational makeup.[104]

Even though it is hard to believe that al-Hilali never warned the members of the Shabiba against factionalism or the evil of political instability, the recollections of Zuhal and Bumarat may well be true. It is conceivable that al-Hilali considered the Shabiba to be a fine entity because of its creedal purity. After all, whenever he criticized Islamists, he did so from a theological angle. It was his theological rectitude, for example, that prompted him to condemn ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin (d. 2012), the founder of Morocco’s Sufi-inspired Islamist group al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsan (Justice and Beneficence). In one of his books, Yasin alluded to the fact that he had

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been anathematized as an unbeliever and an innovator in either the late 1970s or the early 1980s, though he abstained from revealing the identity of his accuser.[105] This unnamed person was none other than al-Hilali.[106] He denounced Yasin not because the latter challenged Hasan II and Morocco's political status quo but because he drew inspiration from Sufism and thus conveyed heretical ideas. Al-Hilali's rare written critiques of Ayatollah Khomeini were also strictly theological in nature. Even when provided with a golden opportunity to comment on issues such as the political rationale for the Islamic revolution, the problem of tyranny, or Khomeini's claims to change the conditions in Iran for the better, al-Hilali chose not to discuss anything but religious errors. In the 1980s, he criticized Khomeini and the Shiʿis in general for contradicting the Sunna, for believing in a hidden imam, and for deeming the first three caliphs oppressive—a denial of the Salafi creed.[107]

Had al-Hilali lived to adopt the notion of Salafi *manhaj*, he may well have discussed sociopolitical issues in greater detail. To be sure, he agreed that Islam was a comprehensive system far superior to socialism, Nazism, communism, and capitalism, as he wrote in 1977 in his last major article with a political tinge.[108] But he did not say what kind of system true Islam provided, nor did he explain what actions Muslims should take to either preserve or establish it. What he thought of the *manhaj* of various Islamists, therefore, remains shrouded in mystery. Unlike Hilmi (whom he apparently did not know) and al-Albani (whom he knew personally), al-Hilali did not directly participate in the ideologization of Salafism.

Incidentally, al-Hilali also failed to accumulate as many honors as the other two and to reach the same level of distinction. In the mid-1980s, he must have believed that his long career, his connections with the Saudi religious establishment, his role as a religious broker, and his increasingly specialized scholarship would be enough to win him the King Faysal Prize. In 1984, a year before Hilmi became its recipient, al-Hilali convinced himself that he was about to be honored by the selection committee. He wrote to Ibn Baz and urged him to confirm the rumor that he had just been awarded the King Faysal Prize.[109] But this rumor, which al-Hilali had heard from his stepson, proved to be false. He thus suffered the embarrassment of asking his Saudi benefactor about a public recognition that was not coming. He never received the prize and died three years later in Casablanca, in the summer of 1987, around the age of 93.

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Conclusion

According to one report, in the eighth century a man asked Malik ibn Anas (d. 795), founder of the Maliki school of law, about the true followers of Islamic tradition: "Who are the people of the Sunna, Abu ʿAbdullah [e.g., Malik]?" the man inquired. Malik reportedly replied, "Those who do not have any names by which they are known."[1] Today, some Muslims echo this position. They take umbrage at the use of labels such as *Salafi* and *Salafism* either because, like Malik, they believe that using distinctive epithets is a sign of religious impurity or because they fear that assigning labels to fellow Muslims will create division and weaken the *umma*. One Moroccan activist, Ahmad al-Raysuni (b. 1953), blamed outsiders for this trend: in his opinion, Westerners were largely responsible for using the labels *Salafi* and *Salafism* with the intent of singling out or even defaming certain Muslims.[2]

As is often the case with discussions about Salafism, al-Raysuni's statement relies more on intuition than evidence. In fact, his sweeping accusation flies in the face of complex conceptual developments that took place over much of the twentieth century. Beginning with Louis Massignon in 1919, it is true that Westerners played a leading role in labeling Islamic modernists as *Salafis*, even though the term was a misnomer. At the time, European and American scholars felt the need for a useful conceptual box in which to place Muslim figures such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani,

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Muhammad ʿAbduh, and their epigones, who all seemed inclined toward a scripturalist understanding of Islam but proved open to rationalism and Western modernity. Whereas these Muslims usually called themselves *reformers* or partisans of *balanced reform* (*al-iṣlāḥ al-muʿtadil*), as Rashid Rida put it, Massignon and those who borrowed from him preferred a more specific category. They chose to adopt *salafiyya*—a technical term of theology, which they mistook for a reformist slogan and wrongly associated with all kinds of modernist Muslim intellectuals.

A hundred years later Massignon's error remains uncorrected. The false idea that an Islamic modernist movement known as *salafiyya* or Salafism existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is still with us. That said, Western academics cannot be blamed for the creation of the noun and adjective *Salafi*, which dated from the medieval period, nor do they bear the entire responsibility for the popularization and transformation of these labels. Although Massignon was the first to write about *salafiyya* as a modern "movement," Arab public intellectuals, journalists, and entrepreneurs had already created conditions conducive to misinterpretation. By hackneying the feminine adjective *salafiyya* (it was not yet an abstract noun) and by using it to name a major bookstore, a journal, and a printing press, they gave observers plenty of reasons to believe that *Salafi* referred to something other than theological fideism, which is precisely what the term had meant to Sunni religious specialists since before the time of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328).

But even if the modernist version of Salafism emerged from a misunderstanding, it cannot be dismissed as a mere Orientalist fancy, for, in a rather ironic twist, the Islamic modernists of Morocco later turned it into a category of their own. Beginning in the 1930s, ʿAllal al-Fasi led the way in rehashing and appropriating Massignon's false ideas about Salafism, seemingly without being aware of their true provenance. Al-Fasi's influence thus breathed new life into the modernist version of the concept, which, as a result, became more commonplace in Morocco and in the scholarship about North Africa. To this day, various Algerian and Tunisian reformers of the first half of the twentieth century are routinely described as modernist Salafis, but in reality, they never articulated the concept as clearly and emphatically as their Moroccan counterparts did. The unequivocal nature of al-Fasi's assertions was unparalleled: not only did he squarely define *salafiyya* as a broad movement of Islamic modernism pioneered

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by al-Afghani and ʿAbduh, but also he included the Muslim reformers of Algeria and Tunisia among its members.

In light of these considerations, there is no easy answer to the question of whether modernist Salafism is an indigenous Islamic concept. Strictly speaking, it originated in the Orientalist circles of France, but Westerners and non-Westerners, Muslim and non-Muslim, all participated in its construction and commodification. Although flawed, the concept became indigenized when al-Fasi and other Moroccan activists adopted it to designate themselves and their movement of Islamic reform. Modernist Salafism thus became part of the Islamic conceptual repertoire—but not in the way that the secondary literature would have us believe. It is possible that some Muslims misinterpreted Salafi labels on their own and wrongly associated them with the Islamic modernism, or balanced reform, of al-Afghani and ʿAbduh. Yet it remains that Massignon's arbitrary invention of modernist Salafism influenced countless Westerners and non-Westerners, either directly or through intermediate links in the chain of transmission. In the end, the issue is one of mutual influence and reinforcement rather than individual authorship. Even if al-Raysuni had the modernist version of Salafism in mind when he blamed Westerners for imposing the label on Muslims, his statement would still be a caricature of a complex exchange of ideas.

The main lesson to draw from the conceptual history of modernist Salafism is that we must rid ourselves of three bad habits. First, we must no longer claim that al-Afghani and ʿAbduh spearheaded a modernist version of Salafism and used *salafiyya* as a slogan. They did not. And based on what the technical term *Salafi* meant to Muslim religious specialists until the early twentieth century, al-Afghani and ʿAbduh were hardly Salafis to begin with. No wonder they never claimed the label for themselves. Second, we must no longer assume that Salafism was a recognizable concept, let alone a movement, at any time prior to the twentieth century. As of now, we have no grounds for believing that Muslims used such a category prior to the 1920s. Third, we must resist the temptation to imagine a history of Salafism based on wishful thinking. There is no point in trying to refine or modify the spurious narrative of origins that Massignon developed between 1919 and 1925. To take al-Afghani and ʿAbduh out of the equation and intimate that Rida was the actual founder of Salafism, for example, is equally misleading.[3] Unlike al-Afghani and ʿAbduh, Rida

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did refer to himself as a Salafi in creed and law, but as far as we know he did not use the abstract noun *Salafism* in his writings, never defined it as a concept or a movement, and never developed a narrative of it. Despite everything that has been said to the contrary, he did not inherit the mantle of some Salafi movement from ʿAbduh, did not bequeath this mantle to the Wahhabis or Hasan al-Banna or anyone else, and did not help transform a preexisting *salafiyya* into a neo-*salafiyya*. All of these convenient myths are products of our imagination.

We get a more nuanced but less straightforward kind of history when we examine Salafism as a concept from an empirical viewpoint. For seven centuries and perhaps even more, the technical term *Salafi* existed and had a purely theological meaning. It was a low-frequency label that referred to the doctrine of the forefathers, or *madhhab al-salaf*—a locution used by religious scholars to designate the nonrationalist, nonmetaphorical interpretation of God's attributes. Salafis, in brief, were Muslims who adhered to central tenets of Hanbali and, later, neo-Hanbali theology (as expounded by Ibn Taymiyya). This lexical situation lasted until the early twentieth century, when Muslims with influence in the Arab press adopted a more cavalier attitude toward the term. Rida, among others, proved instrumental in broadening the meaning of the word, which he used in nontraditional ways, outside the confines of theology. But the more lax the usage of the term became, the more ambiguity it generated. In the early twentieth century, *Salafi* gradually took on a legal sense and came to refer to an anti-*taqlīd* approach to Islamic law. In some instances, it also seemed to denote an anti-innovation and antistagnancy understanding of Islam, but in a rather haphazard fashion. Many people, to be sure, were unclear or had only a vague idea about what it meant to be a Salafi.

To come to terms with the confusion, or in order to take advantage of it, various scholars began offering tentative definitions of a new concept: Salafism (*al-salafiyya*). Between the 1920s and 1950s, this neologism appeared and gained ground in Arabic literature, just as it did in Orientalist literature. Scholars on both sides of the Mediterranean, it seems, began to use *salafiyya* as an abstract noun during that time period, though not necessarily for the same reasons. In the Middle East, especially, the new concept allowed Muslim activists to link the old theological term *Salafi* to a religious orientation that transcended matters of creed. Indeed, *al-salafiyya*, however defined, was usually broader than the medieval

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notion of *madhhab al-salaf*. According to purist Muslims, Salafism encompassed the neo-Hanbalis' doctrine of the forefathers but extended into the realm of Islamic law and sometimes beyond. For the Islamic modernists of Morocco, who drew their inspiration from European Orientalists, *salafiyya* referred instead to a scripturalist yet progressive religious orientation that bore no relation at all to the fideism of the neo-Hanbali creed. Detached from its theological moorings, the term *Salafism* became for them a synonym for *balanced reform*.

In the end, two main conceptualizations of Salafism—one purist and one modernist—rose in parallel to each other during these decades. And because their construction occurred simultaneously, modernist Salafism did not morph into purist Salafism. The former simply faded during the postindependence era, when its leading proponents lost momentum and ceased to embody the hope for sociopolitical change in Morocco. As a result, their modernist version of Salafism ceased to be a living concept. Purist Salafis did not suffer the same fate. Like the flexible reed that survived the sturdy oak in Jean de Lafontaine's fable, they were, by the very nature of their enterprise, better able to withstand the winds of postindependence change. One of the purist Salafis' main advantages was that their relevance as Islamic activists did not hinge on their ability to advance a sociopolitical agenda or challenge the postcolonial state. For this reason, they could afford to eschew active politics, keep a low profile, and even emigrate without betraying their own ideals. Their global outlook, often reinforced by their support for Islamic nationalism during colonial times, also contributed to their survival. Both their skills and their understanding of Salafism were transferable to almost any part of the world—and to Saudi Arabia in particular. As long as they continued to call Muslims to Salafi orthodoxy and orthopraxy, purist Salafis had a chance of retaining their raison d'être. By contrast, the modernist Salafis of Morocco could hardly escape the fact that they were territorial-statist nationalists with deep roots in the political life of their native country. Unwilling to pursue their agenda in a foreign nation-state and unable to compete against socialism, Islamism, and state autocracy, they struggled to stay relevant and eventually failed to keep their version of Salafism from becoming passé.

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The making of Salafism and the struggle over the meaning of this category tell us something significant about Islamic intellectual history in the twentieth century. Just as the growth of colonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries entailed greater interaction between native and nonnative people, so, too, did it favor cross-pollination between indigenous and nonindigenous ways of thinking about Islam. While this is perhaps more obvious in the case of modernist Salafism, even the purist version of the concept is not as pristine as its contemporary adherents like to claim. The construction of purist Salafism does owe something to modern conceptions of religion and ideology that were forged in the crucible of European colonialism and the complicated process of political and cultural decolonization. It is not surprising that, prior to the twentieth century, Salafism was not part of the typological lexicon of traditional Islamic science. The idea of a distinctive Sunni methodology applicable to Islamic theology, law, and virtually all other aspects of the religious and human experience was itself untraditional. Therefore, the purist version of Salafism should not be understood as a medieval or early modern concept or movement. To say that it dates from the time of Ibn Taymiyya or Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab not only is anachronistic but also obfuscates the development of modern Islamic thought. Although many of the ingredients of purist Salafism are old, the recipe and the final product (including the term *Salafism*) are not.

The conceptual history of *salafiyya* also reveals fluctuating conceptions of Islamic reform. In the early twentieth century, religious reform was often not an end in itself but a means to effect broader change. From North Africa to the core Arab states of the Middle East, Islamic activists and intellectuals tended to have ulterior, this-worldly objectives, regardless of their theological or legal stance. They sought to gain respect for Islam as a modern and rational religion while attempting to preserve Islamic identity in a world they perceived as increasingly secularized. They also strove to foster Islamic unity and help their coreligionists acquire intellectual power and political clout so as to defeat imperialist forces. Self-proclaimed Salafis, with the possible exception of those from Najd, shared the same reformist vision: at the time, they sought to achieve some, if not all, of these objectives. But for the purists among them, such end goals posed a problem whenever they appeared incompatible with the enforcement of Salafi orthodoxy and orthopraxy. It would be fair to say that the difficulty

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of balancing religious unity (the constitution of the largest possible Muslim bloc in the face of colonial encroachment) and religious purity (the condemnation of allegedly misguided Muslims who weakened the *umma*) was inherent in how most Salafis of purist inclination approached Islamic reform during the colonial period. As long as they had to deal with this dilemma, they followed an intricate course characterized at times by flexibility and at other times by rigidity.

Flexibility was more evident in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Prior to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, leading reformers who happened to be Salafi in creed were surprisingly open-minded: although they adhered to neo-Hanbali theology, they were often cautious not to condemn other Muslims and other approaches to Islam. They also encouraged Islamic modernism to various degrees, as did non-Salafi reformers such as al-Afghani and ʿAbduh. The aftermath of the First World War and the expansion of European colonialism, however, paved the way for a series of shifts in thought and attitude. The experiences of Rida offer many examples. In the mid-1920s, he became sufficiently confident in King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Al Saʿud's ability to endow the *umma* with political power that he turned against the Shiʿis who dared, with reason, to express doubts about the Saudi-Wahhabi project. Here, changes in religious thought were triggered by social, political, and economic factors. Because the ruler of Najd seemed in the process of establishing a strong, modern, and independent Islamic state in Arabia—a state that had the potential of becoming the political arm of the reform movement and the keystone of Islamic revivalism—intrareligious tolerance began to seem less necessary, if not counterproductive. Shiʿis were not the only victims: Rida and his associates showed their readiness to turn against fellow Salafis who questioned some of the Wahhabis' religious interpretations.

Yet changes in purist Salafis' religious views were quite uneven, which makes it difficult to generalize about their understanding of Islamic reform in the mid-twentieth century. For one thing, some of them always proved to be more rigorist than others. Rida's disciples who remained in the Saudi state after the 1920s or continued to enjoy substantial Saudi patronage during the following decades are a case in point. Early on they became closer in spirit to the Wahhabis of Najd, who hardly concerned themselves with the modernist goals of Islamic reform. But not all Salafis followed the same path. For example, it took Taqi al-Din al-Hilali nearly four

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additional decades to reach the same level of subservience to the Saudi religious establishment and to abandon balanced reform altogether. In the meantime, his religious views meandered between two poles. On certain occasions, he focused on Islamic nationalism and the need for religious unity-in-diversity, but on other occasions, he emphasized strict religious purity. Overall he adjusted his reformist approach depending on the context, geographical location, and needs of the audience he addressed. His attitude toward Western society exhibited a similar ambivalence. Despite his hatred of European colonialism, he sought to gain the respect of Europeans and draw inspiration from them. This was a central aspect of the colonial dialectic: to help bring colonialism to an end, nationalist reformers, including Salafis of various persuasions, had to engage the West. They could not merely reject or ignore colonial powers.

The passing of colonialism thus created a major break that allowed purist Salafis to reconsider the need for religious flexibility. For the most part, it was during and after the transition to independence that purist Salafis in various countries began to embrace a truly uncompromising attitude. This final development reflected two larger trends. The first was that an increasing number of beliefs and practices became associated with purist Salafism in the second half of the twentieth century, thus making the concept simultaneously larger and more specific. To be clear, purist Salafism did not receive a makeover. Its basic theological foundations remained the same. What changed was its scope, which continued to grow, leading to the multiplication of potential sources of disagreement between Salafis and other Muslims as well as among Salafis themselves. The pinnacle of this trend was the development of an all-encompassing Salafi *manhaj*, or method, beginning in the 1970s. The second trend was that purist Salafis lost interest in balanced reform. With the coming of independence, the pursuit of sociopolitical objectives was no longer a priority for them. The end of colonialism had fulfilled their primary goals. By default, their conception of reform came to revolve almost exclusively around religious matters.

The combination of these two trends caused the purist Salafis of the postindependence era to become more stringent and intolerant than their predecessors. Not only did they invoke an enlarged understanding of Salafism that may best be described as an ideology, but also they now pushed for religious purity untempered by the social, political, and educational

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considerations of the colonial period. One example will suffice to show the contrast. In the early twentieth century, an activist like Rida regarded the defense of orthodoxy and orthopraxy as a specific, separate facet of a broader program of Islamic modernism. Thus, being a Salafi was only one aspect of his identity as a reformer—and not always the most important. At the end of the twentieth century, however, this multifaceted view of Islamic reform was no longer tenable among self-proclaimed Salafis. Religious reform—now understood as the purification of the entire gamut of Islamic discourse and activity—took center stage and became the be-all and end-all of purist Salafis.

The story of al-Hilali, from his conversion to Salafi theology in 1921 to his death in 1987, offers a valuable window into most of these transformations. His life of travel and exile is also significant, for it enables us to tie together multiple Salafi networks and historical episodes that may otherwise seem unconnected. But we must be careful not to misconstrue his intellectual journey. He was never a modernist Salafi in the sense that al-Fasi understood it. Technically speaking, it would be a mistake to describe him as a modernist Salafi who became a purist Salafi. Although some details remain unclear, we know that in 1921 he abandoned Sufism and developed an interest in hadith. He then adopted neo-Hanbali theology, either in Morocco or during his first trip to colonial Egypt and India. By the late 1920s, therefore, he was already a Salafi of purist inclination. But, like Rida, his adherence to neo-Hanbali theology did not prevent him from being a proponent of balanced reform. An appropriate description would be that al-Hilali was a Salafi of purist inclination committed to Islamic modernism. In the early twentieth century, this was not yet seen as contradictory.

This equilibrium changed over time. In the first half of the twentieth century, the purist Salafi dimension of al-Hilali's approach to reform was not always prominent. He sometimes wrote like an Islamic modernist, paying little to no attention to the specifics of Salafi orthodoxy and orthopraxy. In the 1930s and 1940s, we could also say that he sometimes wrote like an Islamist, to use a more recent label. As long as Salafism was a conceptual work in progress and as long as the anticolonial struggle represented a common cause for all kinds of Islamic activists, the religious field could not be neatly divided into self-contained categories. Al-Hilali, to be sure, was a purist Salafi, though not everything he did or wrote in the first half of the twentieth century should be viewed as constitutive of

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Salafism. He made it clear, for instance, that his devotion to the cause of Islamic nationalism had nothing to do with *salafiyya*.

Distinctions and self-categorizations became more obvious in the second half of the twentieth century and in the wake of decolonization, when purist Salafis decided to concentrate on religious purification and began to erect conceptual barriers between themselves and both modernists and Islamists. In the 1970s and 1980s, al-Hilali's Salafi identity left little room for ambiguity. He remained at the service of the Saudi religious establishment until the end of his life and abandoned his previous commitment to a multifaceted program of balanced reform, which he now saw as unnecessary and potentially harmful. He thus confined his intellectual production to technical issues of orthodoxy and orthopraxy and could hardly have been mistaken for anything but a purist Salafi.

Nevertheless, Salafism is now such a comprehensive and demanding concept that debates about its contours will inevitably continue among purist Salafis. In recent years, one recurrent point of contention has been whether Salafis should partake in politics. Should they establish political parties at the risk of creating division? Should they run for office at the risk of legitimizing democracy? Should they take to the streets at the risk of encouraging social and political instability? For the most part, these questions fall under the purview of the Salafi method because they pertain to neither orthodoxy nor orthopraxy in a strict sense. Under specific circumstances, different Salafis have, therefore, provided different answers depending on their understanding of the *manhaj*. Likewise, the question of violence and whether Salafis should take arms against stubborn infidels continues to be a hotly debated issue.

Also challenging is the fact that there are always tricky cases where self-proclaimed Salafis transgress or defy the purist paradigm that has become hegemonic since the 1970s. In Egypt, the Costa Salafis (Salafiyyū Kūstā), a group founded in 2011 and named after the coffeehouse chain where its members assembled, is a good example. Because the group was meant to be a microcosm of Tahrir Square and revolutionary Egypt, the Costa Salafis came to include not only Salafis but also liberals, Christians, and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. Such openness did not sit well with Egypt's more stringent Salafis, who accused the Costa Salafis of recklessness and ignorance.[4] These detractors suggested that the group was not sufficiently purist to be deemed Salafi. In China, especially since 2001, some Salafis

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have also adopted an inclusivist and tolerant approach to non-Salafis in order to operate successfully in Chinese society and dissipate the state's suspicions toward Saudi-influenced Muslims. As a result of their pragmatic impulse, these Chinese Salafis have "begun to reach out to Sufi groups and have . . . joined *dhikr* or invocation sessions."[5] They, too, have been criticized, of course, because the purist conceptualization of *salafiyya* remains the benchmark for assessing the legitimacy of self-proclaimed Salafis. This is not to say that the purist version of the concept will dominate indefinitely. But as long as a majority of Salafis strive to outdo other Muslims in religious purity, a looser or milder conception of Salafism is unlikely to win the day and lead to a paradigmatic shift.

One thing is clear, however: Salafism as a category is here to stay. Even its strongest Muslim opponents sometimes refuse to do away with it. They rather try to wrest it from the grip of the purists. The situation is similar in Western academia. Scholars in the humanities and social sciences need typologies and specific analytical categories; without them, discussion and analysis cannot take place. Salafism may be a frustrating category, but it has proven to be useful and will remain so for quite some time, as long as scholars refrain from using it imprudently. The label, ideally, should not be applied to individuals who either reject it or fail to at least abide by the Salafi interpretation of God's attributes, which is still the most basic characteristic of any purist Salafi. Scholars should not use the term according to their own wishes simply because it has a complex history and several layers of meaning. Just as it is a mistake to assume that a Salafi is anyone who takes the *salaf* as role models, so it is a mistake to think that Salafism is a simple marker of religious conservatism, broadly conceived. Although purist Salafis do care about long beards, gender segregation, and proper dress, these issues are not specific to Salafism. We cannot do justice to the conceptual history of the words *Salafi* and *Salafism* unless we recognize that they are technical terms and unless we care about technicalities.

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Notes

Introduction

1. Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *al-Salafiyya: marḥala zamaniyya mubāraka lā madhhab islāmī*, 2nd ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), 13; ʿAmr ʿAbd al-Munʿim Salīm, *al-Manhaj al-salafī ʿinda al-shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī* (Tanta, Egypt: Maktabat al-Ḍiyāʾ, n.d.), 17–21.
2. Bernard Rougier, ed., *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008).
3. Examples abound. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Muhammad ʿAbduh" (Anke von Kügelgen); Oliver Scharbrodt, "The Salafiyya and Sufism: Muhammad ʿAbduh and His *Risālat al-Wāridāt* (Treatise on Mystical Inspirations)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70 (2007): 89–115; Stéphane A. Dudoignon, Komatsu Hisao, and Kosugi Yasushi, eds., *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, Transformation, Communication* (London: Routledge, 2006); M. A. Zaki Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 97.
4. Here and throughout the book, I use the term *modernist* (in its narrower religious sense defined above) and the term *balanced* (*muʿtadil* in Arabic) synonymously. On Christian modernism, see Edwin Ewart Aubrey, "What Is Modernism?" *Journal of Religion* 14 (1935): 426–47.
5. Itzchak Weismann, "Genealogies of Fundamentalism: Salafi Discourse in Nineteenth-Century Baghdad," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36 (2009): 267–80; Basheer M. Nafi, "Salafism Revived: Nuʿman al-Alusi and the Trial of Two Ahmads," *Die Welt des Islams* 49 (2009): 49–97.

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6. An excellent working definition of purist Salafism is Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 33–57.
7. In Islamic scholarship, these first three generations of Muslims (the Companions, the Successors, and the Successors of the Successors) cover a period ranging from the lifetime of the Prophet to roughly the mid-ninth century.
8. See al-Ṭayyib ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Ḥusayn, *al-Salafiyya wa aʿlāmuhā fī Mūrītāniyā Shanqīṭ* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1995), 20–23.
9. Muḥammad Abī Zahra, *al-Salafiyya: muṣṭalaḥ mubtadiʿ ustubdila bi-l-islām* (Tetouan: Maṭbaʿat al-Khalīj al-ʿArabī, 2009), 32, 41. Although purist Salafis are not in the habit of using this particular expression, they do believe that some of the *salaf* were misguided, unreliable, and unworthy of being called "pious." Chief among them were proponents of free will such as Maʿbad al-Juhani (d. 699) and adherents to the doctrine of the createdness of the Qurʾan such as Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 746). In the words of one contemporary Salafi, "Whoever contradicted the Book and the Sunna with his opinion is not a Salafi, even if he lived amid the [*salaf*]." See ʿAlāʾ Bakr, *Malāmiḥ raʾīsiyya li-l-manhaj al-salafī* (Alexandria: Dār al-ʿAqīda, 2002), 12.
10. The Hanbali *madhhab* is unique in that it is simultaneously a legal school and a theological school, though individuals claiming to be Hanbali in creed need not be Hanbali in law.
11. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā shaykh al-islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-ʿĀṣimī al-Najdī al-Ḥanbalī (Beirut: Dār al-ʿArabiyya, 1977), 3:169.
12. Frank E. Vogel, *Islamic Law and Legal System: Studies of Saudi Arabia* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 125–26.
13. Note that purist Salafis never justify the collective authority of the *salaf* through historical and rational arguments alone. Their most categorical arguments are always scriptural. One of them is the hadith in which the Prophet declares: "The best people are [those of] my generation [*qarnī*], then those who come after them, then those who come after them" (found in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*).
14. Mufraḥ ibn Sulaymān al-Qawsī, *al-Manhaj al-salafī: taʿrīfuhu, tārīkhuhu, majālātuhu, qawāʿiduhu, khaṣāʾiṣuhu* (Riyadh: Dār al-Faḍīla, 2002), 147; Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn, *Lumʿat al-iʿtiqād al-hādī ilā sabīl al-rashād*, 3rd ed. (Riyadh: Maktabat Dār Ṭabariyya, 1995), 34.
15. Ṣāliḥ ibn Fawzān al-Fawzān, *Durūs fī sharḥ nawāqiḍ al-islām*, 4th ed. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2007), 182–83.
16. Ibid., 79.
17. Mashhūr ibn Ḥasan Āl Salmān, *al-Salafiyya al-naqiyya wa barāʾatuhā min al-aʿmāl al-radiyya* (Amman: al-Dār al-Athariyya, 2011), 28, 32–34.
18. Muqbil ibn Hādī al-Wādiʿī, *Rudūd ahl al-ʿilm ʿalā al-ṭāʿinīn fī ḥadīth al-siḥr wa bayān buʿd Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā ʿan al-salafiyya*, 2nd ed. (Sanaa: Dār al-Athār, 1999).
19. *al-Aṣāla* 2 (1992): 73.
20. Author's interview with ʿAbd al-Karim Ghallab, Rabat, Morocco (July 19, 2005).

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21. This hadith is found in *Sunan al-Nasāʾī* with a fair (*ḥasan*) chain of transmission. The version found in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* mentions only that every innovation is a misguidance, without the part about hellfire.
22. From the perspective of the purist Salafis, the Enlightenment notions of rationalism and universal human rights represent greater threats to the integrity of pure Islam than, say, the Internet.
23. Salīm al-Hilālī, *Limādhā ikhtartu al-manhaj al-salafī?* (n.p.: Dār Ahl al-Ḥadīth, 1999), 36; Abū ʿAbd al-Salām Ḥasan ibn Qāsim al-Raymī al-Salafī, *Irshād al-bariyya ilā sharʿiyyat al-intisāb li-l-salafiyya wa daḥḍ al-shabah al-bidʿiyya* (Sanaa: Dār al-Athār, 2000), 207–8.
24. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd al-Zanaydī, *al-Salafiyya wa qaḍāyā al-ʿaṣr* (Riyadh: Dār Ishbīlīyā, 1998), 22; Muḥammad ʿImāra, *al-Salafiyya* (Sousse, Tunisia: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 9–12.
25. Asma Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 149–50; Roel Meijer, "Introduction," in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press), 4.
26. Thomas S. Kühn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 64.
27. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, s.v. "Salafiyah" (Emad Eldin Shahin).
28. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabiʿ, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 65–72; Zakia Belhachmi, "Al-Salafiyya, Feminism, and Reforms in the Nineteenth-Century Arab-Islamic Society," *Journal of North African Studies* 9 (2004): 63–90.
29. Muḥammad ʿImāra, *Izālat al-shubuhāt ʿan maʿānī al-muṣṭalaḥāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2008), 34–37; Ibrahim M. Abu Rabiʿ, "Contemporary Islamic Thought: One or Many?" in *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*, ed. Ibrahim M. Abu Rabiʿ (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 8–10.
30. My own doctoral dissertation falls into this category. Also see Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 75–94; Arnaud Lenfant, "L'évolution du salafisme en Syrie au XXe siècle," in Rougier, *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?* 161–78.
31. Abou El Fadl, *Great Theft*, 74, 79; al-Būṭī, *al-Salafiyya*, 236.
32. Ana Belén Soage, "Rashid Rida's Legacy," *Muslim World* 98 (2008): 1–23.
33. Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," in *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1, *Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 160.
34. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Salafiyya" (Pessah Shinar and Werner Ende) and s.v. "Islah" (Ali Merad).
35. David D. Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 49–50; Itzchak Weismann, *Taste of Modernity: Sufism, Salafiyya, and Arabism in Late Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 273–74.
36. Basheer M. Nafi, "Abu al-Thanaʾ al-Alusi: An Alim, Ottoman Mufti, and Exegete of the Qurʾan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34 (2002): 470, 472; Brutus Abu-Manneh, "Salafiyya and the Rise of the Khalidiyya in Baghdad in the Early

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Nineteenth Century," *Die Welt des Islams* 43 (2003): 357; Hala Fattah, "'Wahhabi' Influences, Salafi Responses: Shaykh Mahmud Shukri and the Iraqi Salafi Movement, 1745–1930," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14 (2003): 128–29. The other piece of textual evidence comes from *Maṭāliʿ al-Suʿūd*, a chronicle written by the Mamluk historian ʿUthman ibn Sanad (d. 1826?), which states that a group of religious scholars in Baghdad called themselves "the *salaf*" and those who opposed their beliefs "the *khalaf*." See Abu-Manneh, "Salafiyya," 362–63; Khaled El-Rouayheb, "From Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Din al-Alusi (d. 1899): Changing Views of Ibn Taymiyya Among Non-Hanbali Sunni Scholars," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 305–6.

37. Abū al-Thanāʾ al-Ālūsī, *Gharāʾib al-ightirāb wa nuzhat al-albāb* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Shābandar, 1909), 16. In this passage, the adjective *Ahmadi* refers to either Prophet Muhammad (whose second name was Ahmad according to a sound hadith) or Ahmad ibn Hanbal.
38. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Shaqra, *Hiya al-salafiyya: nisbatan wa ʿaqīdatan wa manhajan* (Mecca: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1992), 17.
39. The word *salafiyya* is not always an abstract noun. In Arabic, it can also be a feminine adjective meaning either "ancestral" or "Ancestralist" or a plural noun meaning "the Ancestralists." One must, therefore, beware of the fallacy of equivocation: while the word *salafiyya* can be found in a few premodern documents, I have never seen a case where it is an abstract noun meaning "Ancestralism." One must also beware of semantic intrusions and other false memories in the secondary literature. Scholars sometimes claim to have encountered the abstract noun *salafiyya* in primary sources that, on closer examination, turn out not to contain this term.
40. Shaqra, *Hiya al-salafiyya*, 18–19, 48; Bakr, *Malāmiḥ raʾīsiyya,* 11–14, 22–24.
41. Nafi, "Abu al-Thanaʾ al-Alusi," 466, 488.
42. This entire argument rests on the wishful reading of a few expressions found in medieval discussions pertaining to Ibn Taymiyya's legal methodology. One such expression is *al-ṭarīqa al-salafiyya*, which, arguably, means "the ancestral way." See Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *al-ʿUqūd al-durriyya min manāqib shaykh al-islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), 117. If we were to read similar medieval expressions with the same conceptual bias, we could conclude that the use of the expression *al-ṭarīqa al-nabawiyya* ("the prophetic way") is proof that a distinct "Nabawi" school of thought was emerging.
43. Karen M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 19–20.
44. *al-Ikhwān al-muslimūn* 2, no. 27 (1944): 3–4.
45. One example is Terje Østebø, *Localising Salafism: Religious Change Among Oromo Muslims in Bale, Ethiopia* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–2, 24.
46. Gad Prudovsky, "Can We Ascribe to Past Thinkers Concepts They Had No Linguistic Means to Express?" *History and Theory* 36 (1997): 31.

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47. Mukhliṣ al-Sabtī, *al-Salafiyya al-wahhābiyya bi-l-Maghrib: Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī rāʾidan* (Casablanca: Manshūrāt al-Majalla al-Maghribiyya li-ʿIlm al-Ijtimāʿ al-Siyāsī, 1995).
48. The term *madhhab al-salaf* could, in principle, be translated into English as "Salafism," but that would be unnecessarily confusing. In Arabic, *madhhab al-salaf* and *al-salafiyya* are distinct expressions.
49. Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim (Riyadh: Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Saʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1980), 2:8; Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-jahmiyya fī taʾsīs bidaʿihim al-kalāmiyya*, ed. Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim (n.p.: Muʾassasat Qurṭuba, 1980), 1:122. For an example dating from the twelfth century, see Abū Saʿd al-Tamīmī al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Yaḥyā al-Muʿallimī al-Yamānī (Hayderabad: Maṭbaʿat Majlis Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1976), 7:167.
50. The opening page of this manuscript, which is kept at the British Library, can be seen online at http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/wahhabi_lg.html (accessed 06/25/12).
51. al-Ālūsī, *Gharāʾib al-ightirāb*, 385–86.
52. ʿAbdallah, the son of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab, had previously claimed that his father's creed was that of the pious ancestors (*ʿaqīdat al-salaf*). See Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAbbūd, *ʿAqīdat al-shaykh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-salafiyya wa atharuhā fi-l-ʿālam al-islāmī*, 3rd ed. (Medina: Maktabat al-Ghurabāʾ al-Athariyya, 1996), 1:365–66.
53. Richard F. Hamilton, *The Social Misconstruction of Reality: Validity and Verification in the Scholarly Community* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).
54. In 2010, I published an article that lays the groundwork for this argument. See Henri Lauzière, "The Construction of *Salafiyya*: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 369–89. Itzchak Weismann's contention that Rashid Rida is the one who constructed *salafiyya* in such a way as to claim that al-Afghani and ʿAbduh were its main representatives is misleading. Rida did offer a genealogy of the modernist reform movement, and he did present himself as heir to al-Afghani and ʿAbduh, but he never called that movement *salafiyya*. This idea originated with Western scholars, not with Rida. See Weismann, "Genealogies," 279–80.

1. Being Salafi in the Early Twentieth Century

1. Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 414–17.
2. Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Sulaymān al-ʿUthaymīn (Riyadh: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 2005), 1:230.
3. Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī al-Bukhārī, "al-Qawl al-jalī fī tarjamat shaykh al-islām Ibn Taymiyya al-ḥanbalī," in *al-Majmūʿ al-mushtamil ʿalā al-durar al-ātiyya*, ed. Faraj Allāh Zakī al-Kurdī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Kurdistān al-ʿIlmiyya, 1911), 127–28.
4. Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Māniʿ, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya li-sharḥ al-Durra al-muḍiyya fī ʿaqd ahl al-firqa al-marḍiyya* (Bombay: Maṭbaʿ al-Ḥaydarī, 1918), 9.

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5. Muḥammad Abū Zahra, *Tārīkh al-madhāhib al-islāmiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 1:225.
6. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā shaykh al-islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-ʿĀṣimī al-Najdī al-Ḥanbalī (Beirut: Dār al-ʿArabiyya, 1977), 4:149.
7. Aziz Al-Azmeh, "Orthodoxy and Hanbalite Fideism," *Arabica* 35 (1988): 253–66.
8. Nader El-Bizri, "God: Essence and Attributes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 124.
9. There is a debate among Muslim scholars about whether the *salaf* relegated to God the interpretation of the full meaning of divine attributes (*tafwīḍ al-maʿnā*). Contemporary Salafis, in line with Ibn Taymiyya and his disciples, argue that the *salaf* did in fact accept the literal sense of the Arabic terms that God used in the revelation. The *salaf*, they claim, affirmed that God has a hand (*yad*), as is mentioned in the Qurʾan, because the meaning of the word *hand* in Arabic was known. Yet they did not assume that God's hand is comparable to a human hand, nor did they ask how or why that is. Therefore, what the *salaf* relegated to God was not the interpretation of the lexical meaning of the term *hand* (which would amount to negation) but rather the modality of this attribute (*tafwīḍ al-kayfiyya*). Anti-Salafi scholars reject this argument and claim instead that the *salaf* performed *tafwīḍ* across the board. See Sayf ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAṣrī, *al-Qawl al-tamām bi-ithbāt al-tafwīḍ madhhaban li-l-salaf al-kirām*, 2nd ed. (Amman: Dār al-Fatḥ, 2010), 58–64.
10. The term *ṭarīqa* (way) was sometimes used instead of *madhhab*, as in the standard Ashʿari formula: "The way of the forefathers is safer, but the way of the successors is more knowledgeable and wiser [*ṭarīqat al-salaf aslam wa ṭarīqat al-khalaf aʿlam wa aḥkam*]."
11. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, 12:37–38, 54.
12. For earlier examples, see Christopher Melchert, *Ahmad ibn Hanbal* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 9.
13. While Ibn Taymiyya agrees that the *salaf* did not begin to claim that the Qurʾan is uncreated until they were forced to, he rules out the possibility that this was an innovation. The underlying premise at work here is that the pious ancestors always believed that the Qurʾan was uncreated, whether they voiced it or not. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil*, ed. Rashīd Riḍā (Cairo: Lajnat al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1976), 3:20.
14. Merlin Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's* Kitāb Akhbār aṣ-Ṣifāt (Leiden: Brill, 2002).
15. Caterina Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya *wa-Jamaʿatuhu*: Authority, Conflict and Consensus in Ibn Taymiyya's Circle," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33–36. On Ibn Taymiyya's rationalist recasting of Hanbali fideism, see Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 19–22; M. Sait Özervarli, "The Qurʾānic Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyya and His Criticism of the *Mutakallimūn*," in Rapoport and Ahmed, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 78–100.

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16. Manṣūr Muḥammad Muḥammad ʿUways, *Ibn Taymiyya laysa salafiyyan* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʿArabiyya, 1970); Racha el Omari, "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna' and His Polemics with the Ashʿarites," in Rapoport and Ahmed, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 101–19.
17. Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Saqqāf, *al-Salafiyya al-wahhābiyya: afkāruhā al-asāsiyya wa judhūruhā al-tārīkhiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Mīzān, 2005), 90–97. Al-Buti makes a similar argument and claims that the notion of *madhhab al-salaf* did not exist at the time of the forefathers. What eventually emerged was not a doctrine per se, he argues, but rather a set of rules and a methodological framework. See Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *al-Salafiyya: marḥala zamaniyya mubāraka lā madhhab islāmī*, 2nd ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), 19, 223–24.
18. Nuʿman al-Alusi was the son of Abu al-Thanaʾ al-Alusi, whom I mentioned in the introduction. The most thorough study of the book and its author is Basheer M. Nafi, "Salafism Revived: Nuʿman al-Alusi and the Trial of Two Ahmads," *Die Welt des Islams* 49 (2009): 49–97.
19. Nuʿmān al-Ālūsī, *Jalāʾ al-ʿaynayn fī muḥākamat al-Aḥmadayn*, ed. al-Dānī ibn Munīr Āl Zahwī (Sidon, Lebanon: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2006), 61, 73, 222, 336, 400, 407.
20. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Dafʿ shubah al-tashbīh bi-akuff al-tanzīh*, ed. Ḥasan al-Saqqāf, 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Imām al-Rawwās, 2007), 102; Ibn Kathīr, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ Manṣūr (Beirut: Dār al-Madār al-Islāmī, 2004), 843, 850; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mizān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2002), 7:452, where one Maliki scholar is said to have been Salafi in creed (*salafī al-muʿtaqad*); Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Lubb al-lubāb fī taḥrīr al-ansāb*, ed. Pieter Johaness Veth (Leiden: S. & J. Luchtmans, 1840), 138. This compendium of names and epithets builds on the works of al-Samʿani (d. 1166) and Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233) and clearly explains that a Salafi is someone who follows the doctrine of the forefathers. See also Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Arnāʾūt and Maḥmūd al-Arnāʾūt (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1992), 8:91; Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Saffārīnī, *Lawāmiʿ al-anwār al-bahiyya wa sawāṭiʿ al-asrār al-athariyya*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1991), 2:458, where he explains that the imams of the past disagreed on matters of Islamic law but were all Salafi in creed.
21. See the responsum by two of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab's sons in *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil al-najdiyya* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1928), 1:32. See also ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim al-ʿĀṣimī, ed., *al-Durar al-saniyya fī-l-ajwiba al-najdiyya*, 6th ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-Qāsim, 1996), 1:226. On the Hanbali opposition, see David Commins, "Traditional Anti-Wahhabi Hanbalism in Nineteenth-Century Arabia," in *Ottoman Reform and Muslim Regeneration*, ed. Itzchak Weismann and Fruma Zachs (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 81–96.
22. The text in *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil al-najdiyya* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1930), 4:453, is mistakenly attributed to ʿAbdallah ibn Hasan. For the corrected version, see al-ʿĀṣimī, *al-Durar al-saniyya*, 1:319.
23. *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil al-najdiyya* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1927), 3:295, 300; Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿĪsā al-Najdī, "Tanbīh al-nabīh wa-l-ghabī fī-l-radd ilā

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al-Midrāsī wa-l-Ḥalabī," in *al-Majmūʿ al-mushtamil ʿalā al-durar al-ātiyya*, ed. Faraj Allāh Zakī al-Kurdī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Kurdistān al-ʿIlmiyya, 1911), 241, 257, 279, 282–83.

24. Ibn Mānīʿ, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, 120.
25. Examples include the 1887 biographical dictionary of Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī, *al-Misk al-adhfar*, ed. Nuʿmān al-Aʿẓamī (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Ādāb, 1930), 19, 82; Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Waḥda al-islāmiyya wa-l-ukhuwwa al-dīniyya wa tawḥīd al-madhāhib* (Cairo: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, n.d.), 10; *al-Manār* 10 (1907): 145; *al-Manār* 11 (1908): 47; *al-Manār* 15 (1912): 855; *al-Muqtabas* 7 (1912): 227.
26. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, *Umm al-qurā* (Cairo: al-Sayyid al-Furātī, 1899), 10.
27. al-Būṭī, *al-Salafiyya*, 234–35.
28. Muḥammad ibn Nāṣir al-ʿAjmī, ed., *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala bayna Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī wa Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2001), 190. For a similar complaint about people's ignorance of the notion of *madhhab al-salaf*, see his 1909 letter to Muhammad Nasif in Ẓāfir al-Qāsimī, *Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī wa ʿaṣruhu* (Damascus: Maktabat Aṭlas, 1965), 603–4.
29. Dyala Hamzah, "From *ʿIlm* to *Ṣiḥāfa* or the Politics of Public Interest (*Maṣlaḥa*): Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and His Journal *al-Manār* (1898–1935)," in *The Making of the Arab Intellectual: Empire, Public Sphere and the Colonial Coordinates of Selfhood*, ed. Dyala Hamzah (London: Routledge, 2013), 90–127.
30. In addition to the sources already cited, see *al-Manār* 8 (1905): 614, 620, where Rida reprints and comments on al-Saffarini's theological treatise; *al-Manār* 12 (1909): 184; *al-Manār* 21 (1919): 230; Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ḥakīm al-shahīr bi-Tafsīr al-Manār*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1948), 9:131. There are many other examples.
31. David D. Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 51–54.
32. *al-Manār* 17 (1914): 632.
33. *al-Manār* 7 (1905): 958.
34. *al-Manār* 7 (1904): 793.
35. Andrew Lugg, *Wittgenstein's Investigations 1–133: A Guide and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2004), 83.
36. The English version is Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. S. M. Stern, trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern (Albany: SUNY Press, 1971), 2:32.
37. al-Dhahabī, *al-Mushtabih fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. Pieter de Jong (Lugduni Batavorum, Netherlands: Brill, 1863), 269. There is a slightly more specific explanation in al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1996), 21:6.
38. al-Dhahabī, *Liber Classium Virorum qui Korani et Traditionum Cognitione Excelluerunt* [*Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāẓ*], ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Vandenhöck et Ruprecht, 1833), 1:58.
39. al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), 4:1431.
40. See his March 1909 letter to Anastase-Marie de Saint Élie reprinted in Daniel Massignon, ed., *Autour d'une conversion: lettres de Louis Massignon et de ses parents au père Anastase de Baghdad* (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 57.

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41. *Revue du monde musulman* 34 (1916–1918): 329–31.
42. *Revue du monde musulman* 36 (1918–1919): 325.
43. Pierre Rocalve, *Louis Massignon et l'islam* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1993), 157; *Revue du monde musulman* 36 (1918–1919): 272; *Revue du monde musulman* 59 (1925): 312.
44. Compare Samuel G. Wilson, *Modern Movements Among Moslems* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1916), 158, 160, with Massignon's remark in *Revue des études islamiques* 5 (1931): A167.
45. Ignaz Goldziher, *Schools of Koranic Commentators*, ed. and trans. Wolfgang H. Behn (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 204.
46. Daniel Massignon, *Le voyage en Mésopotamie et la conversion de Louis Massignon en 1908* (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 17; al-ʿAjmī, *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala*, 169–70, 200; *Revue du monde musulman* 57 (1924): 245; Louis Massignon, "My Meetings with Maulana Azad," in *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: A Memorial Volume*, ed. Humayun Kabir (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1959), 27–28.
47. *al-Manār* 5 (1902): 405.
48. *Revue du monde musulman* 59 (1925): 312–13.
49. *al-Manār* 32 (1931): 15; *al-Manār* 11 (1908): 90–95, 205, 740–42.
50. *al-Manār* 17 (1914): 631.
51. According to Rida, ʿAbduh and Sayyid Ahmad Khan (who, incidentally, pushed for a modern form of *kalām*) belonged to the same movement of Islamic reform. See *al-Manār* 11 (1908): 90–91, 94–95.
52. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *al-Aʿmāl al-kāmila li-l-imām al-shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImāra (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:342–43; ʿUthmān Amīn, *Rāʾid al-fikr al-miṣrī al-imām Muḥammad ʿAbduh* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li-l-Thaqāfa, 1996), 66, 80.
53. ʿAbduh did make such claims. The best example is ʿAbduh, *al-Aʿmāl al-kāmila*, 3:301.
54. *al-Manār* 13 (1910): 627.
55. *al-Manār* 29 (1928): 290. ʿAbduh's conception of *tafwīḍ* also differed from that of Ibn Taymiyya.
56. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, ed. Rashīd Riḍā, 7th ed. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1934), 17–18, 22. The second edition, which dates from 1908, includes a foreword in which Rida addresses the removal of ʿAbduh's statement about the Qurʾan being created. Yet it does not include the above-mentioned footnotes.
57. See *al-Zahrāʾ* 4 (1928): 572, where Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib warns his readers against ʿAbduh's inclination for speculative theology.
58. *al-Manār* 7 (1904): 52–54; *al-Manār* 7 (1905): 948.
59. *al-Zahrāʾ* 2 (1926): 87.
60. For a fuller account of this argument, see Henri Lauzière, "The Construction of *Salafiyya*: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 369–89.
61. The claim that the production of the Salafiyya Press and Bookstore "reflects all the essential desiderata of the [Salafiyya] movement" builds on Massignon's original mistake. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Salafiyya" (Werner Ende).

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62. Lothrop Stoddard, *The New World of Islam* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 86.
63. *The Moslem World* 12, no. 1 (1922): 21.
64. Henri Laoust, "Le réformisme orthodoxe des 'Salafiya' et les caractères généraux de son orientation actuelle," *Revue des études islamiques* 6 (1932): 175. Note that the date is wrong: ʿAbduh did not reach Paris until 1884. But in 1925, Massignon had already made the mistake of listing 1883 as the year in which al-Afghani and ʿAbduh allegedly founded the reformist party of the Salafiyya. Laoust merely accepted this claim without checking it. See *Revue du monde musulman* 59 (1925): 281.
65. Hamilton A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1947), 29, 35, 133.
66. Muḥammad al-Bahī, *al-Fikr al-islāmī al-ḥadīth wa ṣilatuhu bi-l-istiʿmār al-gharbī*, 4th ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Wahba, 1964), 94, 175–77.
67. I borrow this expression and its definition from Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 57.
68. A good example is Yūsuf al-Nabhānī, *Kitāb shawāhid al-ḥaqq fī-l-istighātha bi-sayyid al-khalq* (Cairo: n.p., 1905), 10–11. The book was originally published in 1902.
69. *al-Manār* 8 (1905): 620.
70. Another example is Riḍā, *Tafsīr*, 9:133.
71. Abū Yaʿlā al-Zawāwī, *al-Islām al-ṣaḥīḥ* (Beni Messous, Algeria: Manshūrāt al-Ḥibr, 2008), 98, 163; Pessah Shinar, "A Controversial Exponent of the Algerian Salafiyya: The Kabyle ʿAlim, Imam and Sharif Abu Yaʿla Saʿid b. Muhammad al-Zawawi," in Pessah Shinar, *Modern Islam in the Maghrib* (Jerusalem: The Max Schloessinger Memorial Foundation, 2004), 273.
72. Riḍā, *al-Waḥda*, 9, 216. The introduction dates from late 1906, but the rest of the book dates from 1901.
73. *al-Manār* 13 (1910): 627.
74. Sulaymān ibn Saḥmān, "Kashf al-awhām wa-l-iltibās ʿan tashbīh baʿḍ al-aghbiyāʾ min al-nās," in *Ijmāʿ ahl al-sunna al-nabawiyya ʿalā takfīr al-muʿaṭṭila al-jahmiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Zīr Āl Ḥamad (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1994–1995), 106; Sulaymān ibn Saḥmān, "Tamyīz al-ṣidq min al-mayn fī muḥāwarat al-rajulayn," in Āl Ḥamad, *Ijmāʿ ahl al-sunna*, 136, 149.
75. Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī-l-radd ʿalā al-Nabhānī* (Riyadh: Maṭābiʿ Najd al-Tijāriyya, 1971), 2:313.
76. Ibid., 1:119, 122.
77. Riḍā, *Tafsīr*, 10:446, 12:246.
78. Riḍā, *al-Waḥda*, 204.
79. *al-Manār* 8 (1905): 5; *al-Manār* 17 (1914): 634.
80. al-ʿAjmī, *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala*, 190; *al-Manār* 15 (1912): 857–74.
81. Mun'im Sirry, "Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī and the Salafi Approach to Sufism," *Die Welt des Islams* 51 (2011): 75–108; Itzchack Weismann, *Taste of Modernity: Sufism, Salafiyya, and Arabism in Late Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 293–94.

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82. Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 1:29, 30, 32, 139. Here, I must disagree with Hala Fattah's reading of *Ghāyat al-amānī*, which I find overly sympathetic. Hala Fattah, "'Wahhabi' Influences, Salafi Responses: Shaykh Mahmud Shukri and the Iraqi Salafi Movement, 1745–1930," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14 (2003): 145–46.
83. Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī, *al-Misk al-adhfar*, 19, 24.
84. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa ilā Allāh fī aqṭār mukhtalifa* (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Ḥadītha, n.d.), 7.
85. See the 1931 biographical dictionary of ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ al-Fāsī, *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh al-musammā Riyāḍ al-janna aw al-Mudhish al-muṭrib*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd Khayālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003), 2:190, 198–99, 207. See also the 1906 letter from ʿAbd al-Hayy al-Kattani to Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi in Ẓāfir al-Qāsimī, *Jamāl al-Dīn*, 566.
86. Ismāʿīl al-Khaṭīb, *Muḥammad al-ʿArabī al-Khaṭīb: rāʾid al-ṣiḥāfa bi-l-Maghrib* (Tetouan: Manshūrāt Jamʿiyyat al-Baʿth al-Islāmī, 1994), 37, 74.
87. ʿAbbās al-Jirārī, "Abū Shuʿayb al-Dukkālī: rāʾid al-iṣlāḥ al-fikrī fī-l-Maghrib al-ḥadīth," *al-Akādīmiyya* 7 (1990): 15–26.
88. Al-Hilali did not know his exact date of birth but claimed that it was in mid-1894 (the end of 1311 or the beginning of 1312, according to the Muslim calendar). Muḥammad al-Majdhūb, *ʿUlamāʾ wa mufakkirūn ʿaraftuhum* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 1977), 1:183.
89. Ibid., 1:184.
90. *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 1, no. 7 (1932): 26.
91. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Hadīyat al-hādiyya ilā al-ṭāʾifa al-tijāniyya* (n.p.: n.p., 1973), 7.
92. Walter B. Harris, *Tafilet: The Narrative of a Journey of Exploration in the Atlas Mountains and the Oases of North-West Sahara* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1895), 298.
93. al-Hilālī, *al-Hadīyat al-hādiyya*, 7–8. One of these local saints was al-Hilali's ancestor.
94. Ibid., 9.
95. Ibid., 11.
96. al-Majdhūb, *ʿUlamāʾ wa mufakkirūn*, 1:185.
97. He discusses this issue in *al-Fatḥ* 11 (1937): 1001.
98. al-Majdhūb, *ʿUlamāʾ wa mufakkirūn*, 1:185. Al-Hilali mentions conflicting dates, and it is, therefore, difficult to provide a reliable chronology.
99. Ibid., 1:192, 195; al-Hilālī, *al-Hadīyat al-hādiyya*, 23.
100. The nature of this diploma is unclear. See al-Majdhūb, *ʿUlamāʾ wa mufakkirūn*, 1:185–86, 191.
101. al-Hilālī, *al-Hadīyat al-hādiyya*, 13–14. It is worth noting that al-Kattani had obtained licenses (*ijāzāt*) from Muhammad ʿAbduh and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi.
102. Ibid., 14.
103. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ṣaḥrāwī, *Shaykh al-islām Muḥammad ibn al-ʿArabī al-ʿAlawī* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribiyya, 1965), 18–19.
104. Ibid., 27, 30.
105. Moha Khettouch, *Cheikh al Islam Mohamed Belarabi Alaoui: le néosalafisme et l'éthique dans la vie d'un grand Alem* (Rabat: Dar al-Qalam, 2003), 59–60, 165; ʿAbd al-Raḥīm

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al-Wardīghī, *al-Munāḍil shaykh al-islām Muḥammad ibn al-ʿArabī al-ʿAlawī, 1880–1964: ḥayātuhu wa jihāduhu* (Rabat: al-Hilāl al-ʿArabī, 1996), 45–47.

106. Jamil Abun-Nasr, "The Salafiyya Movement in Morocco: The Religious Bases of the Moroccan Nationalist Movement," *St. Anthony's Papers* 16, no. 3 (1963): 99.
107. al-Ṣaḥrāwī, *Shaykh al-islām*, 29–30; Khettouch, *Cheikh al Islam*, 167, 253.
108. al-Hilālī, *al-Hadīyat al-hādiyya*, 15–17.
109. The expression is from Jean-Louis Triaud, "La Tijâniyya: une confrérie pas comme les autres?" in *La Tijâniyya: une confrérie musulmane à la conquête de l'Afrique*, ed. Jean-Louis Triaud and David Robinson (Paris: Karthala: 2000), 15.
110. These debates are narrated in al-Hilālī, *al-Hadīyat al-hādiyya*, 17–22.
111. ʿAbdallāh Āl Bassām, *ʿUlamāʾ Najd khilāla thamāniyat qurūn*, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1998), 1:438–40.
112. In a private letter addressed to Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi in 1910, al-Alusi discusses the case of a Tunisian who converted to the doctrine of the forefathers after having abandoned Sufi beliefs similar to those of al-Hilali. He also mentions the Moroccan scholar ʿAbd al-Hafiz al-Fasi, whom he characterizes as Salafi in creed on the basis of his opposition to Sufi exaggerators who misunderstood *tawḥīd*. See al-ʿAjmī, *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala*, 113–16.
113. al-Hilālī, *al-Hadīyat al-hādiyya*, 22; Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 1:221–26.

2. Rashid Rida's Rehabilitation of the Wahhabis and Its Consequences

1. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa ilā Allāh fī aqṭār mukhtalifa* (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Ḥadītha, n.d.), 15.
2. Ibid., 10.
3. *Lisān al-dīn* 1, no. 6 (1946): 17.
4. Muḥammad al-Majdhūb, *ʿUlamāʾ wa mufakkirūn ʿaraftuhum* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 1977), 1:186.
5. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 1, no. 3 (1957): 24.
6. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Qāḍī al-ʿadl fī ḥukm al-bināʾ ʿalā al-qubūr* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿArabiyya bi-Miṣr, 1927), 8; *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 7, no. 7 (1964): 5.
7. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 231.
8. The existence of these unsupported assumptions is mentioned in Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 46–47.
9. Ana Belén Soage, "Rashid Rida's Legacy," *Muslim World* 98 (2008): 1–23; ʿAbd al-Rahman Abdulrahman ʿAbd al-Rahim, "The Effect of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab's Salafiyya *Daʿwa* on Religious and Social Reform in Egypt," in *A History of the Arabian Peninsula*, ed. Fahd al-Semmari (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 138–39.

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10. al-Sayyid Yūsuf, *Rashīd Riḍā wa-l-ʿawda ilā manhaj al-salaf* (Cairo: Mīrīt li-l-Nashr wa-l-Maʿlūmāt, 2000), 35.
11. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *al-Aʿmāl al-kāmila li-l-imām al-shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImāra (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993), 3:332.
12. *al-Manār* 21 (1919): 249.
13. *al-Manār* 28 (1927): 5.
14. Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Khilāfa* (Cairo: al-Zahrāʾ li-l-Iʿlām al-ʿArabī, 1988), 82–83.
15. These frank remarks troubled one prominent Saudi scholar who argued, in opposition to Rida's contention, that ʿAbd al-ʿAziz was proactive and that his apparent aloofness was part of a planned political strategy. See the editor's footnote in Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Mukhtār min al-Manār*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Āl al-Shaykh, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: n.p., 1995), 1:30.
16. Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Wahhābiyyūn wa-l-Ḥijāz* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1925), 26.
17. Ibid., 50.
18. Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3. The sultanate of Najd was not entirely independent. Like most other polities in the Arabian Peninsula, it became part of the British imperial framework. Daniel Silverfarb, "The Anglo-Najd Treaty of December 1915," *Middle Eastern Studies* 16 (1980): 167–77.
19. Riḍā, *al-Wahhābiyyūn*, 3–4, 70–72. The news that ʿAbd al-ʿAziz had signed the Anglo-Najd treaty in 1915 put Rida in a difficult position because he had previously condemned Sharif Husayn for his alliance with Britain. Nevertheless, he continued to defend King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz, claiming that the latter was then inexperienced and had acted out of necessity.
20. A point best made in David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).
21. Riḍā, *al-Wahhābiyyūn*, 55–56.
22. Ibid., 56. Rida explains that according to the Sunna it is forbidden to either bury a corpse in a mosque or build a mosque over a tomb. In these cases, demolition is required. What Rida fails to mention, however, is that during the Umayyad period the great mosque of Medina had been expanded to encompass the Prophet's tomb.
23. The two Wahhabis had fallen off the building while trying to remove the golden spheres and the crescent that were attached to the tip of the dome.
24. *al-Manār* 21 (1919): 233.
25. *al-Manār* 22 (1921): 182.
26. *al-Manār* 27 (1926): 555.
27. *al-Manār* 26 (1925): 462.
28. Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Salmān, *Rashīd Riḍā wa daʿwat al-shaykh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb* (Kuwait City: Maktabat al-Muʿallā, 1988), 510.
29. Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi had also voiced his disappointment that the people of Najd were not as moderate as the other Salafis in Egypt, Greater Syria, Iraq, and the Hijaz. See *al-Manār* 16 (1913): 749. See also Mahmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī, *Tārīkh Najd*, ed. Muḥammad Bahjat al-Atharī (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, n.d.), 41, 94.

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30. See the primary documents unearthed by Sulaymān ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Kharāshī, *Taʿaqqubāt al-shaykh al-ʿallāma Sulaymān ibn Saḥmān ʿalā baʿḍ taʿlīqāt al-shaykh Rashīd Riḍā* (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣamīʿī, 2009), 117–25, 141–211.
31. The letter is reprinted in Shakīb Arslān*, al-Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā aw ikhāʾ arbaʿīn sana* (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat Ibn Zaydūn, 1937), 456–60.
32. Ibid., 459.
33. The letter and Rida's reply are found in *al-Manār* 29 (1928): 143–47.
34. Ibid., 144.
35. Ibid., 146.
36. Rida explains this position in *al-Manār* 17 (1914): 633.
37. Among them was Yusuf Yasin, a Syrian and former student of Rida who moved to Arabia in 1923. See Harry St. John Philby, *Saʿudi Arabia* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1955), 294–96. On Kamil al-Qassab, a Syrian who had experience in the education system under Sharif Husayn, and Ibrahim al-Shura, an Egyptian based in the Hijaz who had studied at Dar al-ʿUlum in Cairo, see ʿAbd al-Laṭīf ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Duhaysh, *al-Taʿlīm al-ḥukūmī al-munaẓẓam fī ʿahd al-malik ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz* (Mecca: Maktabat al-Ṭullāb al-Jāmiʿī, 1987), 35.
38. *al-Manār* 27 (1926): 18.
39. Peter Sluglett and Marion Farouk-Sluglett, "The Precarious Monarchy: Britain, Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud and the Establishment of the Kingdom of Hijaz, Najd and Its Dependencies, 1925–1932," in *State, Society and Economy in Saudi Arabia*, ed. Tim Niblock (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 46–48.
40. Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Manār wa-l-Azhar* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1934), 32.
41. Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 108.
42. Ibid., 116.
43. Zakariyā Sulaymān Bayyūmī, *Mawqif Miṣr min ḍamm Ibn Saʿūd li-l-Ḥijāz, 1924–1926* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jāmiʿī, 1989), 62–65.
44. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 126.
45. Details about the school may be found in Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 195–98. I have excluded Yusuf Yasin from the larger group of eight, even though he was a disciple of Rida and a graduate of Dar al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshad. Serving as an advisor to King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz on political affairs, Yasin was not primarily involved in religious matters and had little contact with the other disciples of Rida in the Hijaz. For similar reasons, I have excluded ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-ʿAtiqi, a Najdi graduate of Dar al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshad who performed political functions in the Hijaz at the time.
46. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1929): 448.
47. ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Muʿallimī, *Aʿlām al-makkiyyīn min al-qarn al-tāsiʿ ilā al-qarn al-rābiʿ ʿashr al-hijrī* (n.p.: Muʾassasat al-Furqān li-l-Turāth al-Islāmī, 2000), 1:317–18; ʿAdnān al-Khaṭīb, *Muḥammad Bahjat al-Bīṭār: ḥayātuhu wa āthāruhu* (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥijāz, 1976).

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48. Muḥammad Bahjat al-Bīṭār, *al-Riḥla al-najdiyya al-ḥijāziyya* (Damascus: al-Maṭbaʿat al-Jadīda, 1967), 3, 29.
49. Ibid., 53; Ibn Duhaysh, *al-Taʿlīm al-ḥukūmī*, 22, 114–16.
50. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Dāwūd, *al-Jamʿiyyāt al-islāmiyya fī Miṣr wa dawruhā fī nashr al-daʿwa al-islāmiyya* (Cairo: al-Zahrāʾ li-l-Iʿlām al-ʿArabī, 1992), 178.
51. See the conclusion he wrote in Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Sunna wa-l-shīʿa aw al-wahhābiyya wa-l-rāfiḍa*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1947), 238–73.
52. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī, *ʿInāyat al-malik ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz bi-nashr al-kutub* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd, 1987), 15.
53. *al-Manār* 29 (1928): 480.
54. al-Muʿallimī, *Aʿlām al-makkiyyīn*, 1:203–4; ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Siyar wa tarājim baʿḍ ʿulamāʾina fī-l-qarn al-rābiʿ ʿashr li-l-hijra*, 3rd ed. (Jeddah: Tihāma, 1982), 327; *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 15 (1951): 414.
55. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Āl al-Shaykh, *Mashāhir ʿulamāʾ Najd wa ghayrihim*, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-Yamāma, 1975), 514; Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Sayyid Aḥmad, *al-Shaykh al-ʿallāma al-muḥaddith Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Razzāq Ḥamza min kibār ʿulamāʾ al-ḥaramayn al-sharīfayn* (Jeddah: Maktabat al-Sawādī li-l-Tawzīʿ, 2004), 33–35, 130–31; al-Muʿallimī, *Aʿlām al-makkiyyīn*, 1:397–98.
56. At least three additional religious reformers linked to Rida moved to the Hijaz following the Saudi conquest, but they appeared to have played a less significant role. One was ʿAbd al-Muhaymin Abu al-Samh (d. 1979), ʿAbd al-Zahir's younger brother. He became director of a secondary school in the Qasim region and was later appointed imam at Mecca's holy mosque in 1950. See al-Muʿallimī, *Aʿlām al-makkiyyīn*, 1:204–5. Another was the Algerian scholar ʿAbd al-Rahman Abu Hajar (d. 1940), who attended Rida's *majālis* in Cairo and became a professor and supervisor at Mecca's holy mosque in 1928. See *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 4, no. 4 (1940): 47–48; ʿAbdallāh Saʿīd Abū Rās and Badr al-Dīn al-Dīb, *al-Malik ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz wa-l-taʿlīm* (Riyadh: Sharikat al-ʿUbaykān, 1986), 139–41. A third one was the Egyptian Sulayman Abaza, who taught in Mecca. See al-Muʿallimī, *Aʿlām al-makkiyyīn*, 1:13.
57. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 133, 136–37.
58. Ibid., 148; *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 1, no. 3 (1957): 25.
59. al-Majdhūb, *ʿUlamāʾ wa mufakkirūn*, 1:187; al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 127.
60. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, "Dīwān al-shiʿr" (unpublished typescript), 102.
61. Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928–1942* (Reading, UK: Garnet, 1998), 140–41.
62. ʿAbdallāh Mansī al-ʿAbdalī, *al-Masjid al-ḥaram fī qalb al-malik ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz* (Mecca: ʿAbdallāh Mansī al-ʿAbdalī, 1999), 44–45.
63. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 4, no. 4 (1940): 48.
64. ʿAbdallāh Āl Bassām, *ʿUlamāʾ Najd khilāla thamāniyat qurūn*, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1998), 1:233–34.
65. Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916–1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 109–10.

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66. Abū Rās and al-Dīb, *al-Malik ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz*, 121.
67. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 162.
68. Ibid., 163; Āl al-Shaykh, *Mashāhir*, 514.
69. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928): 206; Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 183–85.
70. al-Hilālī, "Dīwān," 28.
71. Ibid., 103.
72. For a description by a traveler from the British Empire who saw the garden in 1925, see Eldon Rutter, *The Holy Cities of Arabia* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), 541.
73. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 129.
74. Ibn Duhaysh, *al-Taʿlīm al-ḥukūmī*, 66–68.
75. Aḥmad ʿAlī, *Dhikrayyāt* (Taʾif: Manshūrāt Nādī al-Ṭāʾif al-Adabī, 1977), 73. Ahmad ʿAli (al-Kazimi) was among the earliest students of the institute, both before and after its temporary closure.
76. Ibn Duhaysh, *al-Taʿlīm al-ḥukūmī*, 70–71; *al-ʿArab* 18 (1983): 511.
77. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 1, no. 3 (1957): 25.
78. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 178–79.
79. Ibid., 180.
80. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928): 4–5.
81. Ibid., 5.
82. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1929): 294–96, 381–82.
83. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928): 203, 221–23.
84. Ibid., 161–65.
85. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 164.
86. *Lisān al-dīn* 4, no. 9 (1950): 17–18.
87. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 165.
88. Ibid., 166.
89. Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission*, 96; Lawrence P. Goldrup, "Saudi Arabia, 1902–1932: Development of a Wahhabi Society" (PhD diss., UCLA, 1971), 218–19.
90. Āl Bassām, *ʿUlamāʾ Najd*, 4:145.
91. *al-Manār* 29 (1928): 121–22. This was published when al-Hilali was in Medina.
92. Riḍā, *al-Sunna wa-l-shīʿa*, 1:19.
93. Ibid., 1:29.
94. Ibid., 1:23–28; 2:3–5.
95. The first article of the series was published under the name Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Hilali. See *al-Manār* 28 (1927): 349–63.
96. al-Hilālī, *al-Qāḍī al-ʿadl*, 8.
97. Riḍā, *al-Sunna wa-l-shīʿa*, 1:39.
98. As explained in Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Munāẓaratān bayna rajul sunnī wa huwa al-duktūr Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī al-Ḥusaynī wa imāmayn mujtahidayn shīʿiyayn* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), 15–16.
99. Al-Khuli's article was published in *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928): 154–58.
100. Ibid., 235.

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101. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1929): 442, 444. Rida's disciples did not reveal the name of this Damascene scholar.
102. *al-Manār* 32 (1932): 545–47, 553–54.
103. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Dulayshī, *Min aʿlām al-fikr al-islāmī fī-l-Baṣra: al-shaykh Muḥammad Amīn al-Shinqīṭī, 1876–1932* (Baghdad: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shuʾūn al-Dīniyya, 1981), 68–71. He should not be confused with the younger and more famous Muhammad al-Amin ibn Muhammad al-Mukhtar al-Shanqiti (d. 1973), who moved to Saudi Arabia in 1946.
104. al-Muʿallimī, *Aʿlām al-makkiyyīn*, 1:203.
105. See al-Hilali's biography of him in *al-Fatḥ* 7 (1932): 691.
106. Echoing the disenchantment of the world, Rida continued to downplay miracles because he considered them unscientific and unconvincing. Instead of proving the inherent rationality of Islam, he wrote, they tend to steer educated people away from religion. Rashid Rida, *The Muhammadan Revelation*, trans. Yusuf T. DeLorenzo (Alexandria, VA: Al-Saadawi, 1996), 27–35.
107. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 167.
108. Ibn Duhaysh, *al-Taʿlīm al-ḥukūmī*, 117.
109. Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission*, 71.
110. ʿAlī al-Riḍā al-Ḥusaynī, *Muḥammad Bahjat al-Bīṭār: bahjat al-islām* (n.p.: al-Dār al-Ḥusayniyya li-l-Kitāb, 1997), 9–10.
111. Muḥyī al-Dīn Riḍā, *Ṣuwar wa mushāhadāt min al-Ḥijāz* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Tijāriyya al-Ḥadītha, 1953), 134.
112. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 18 (1954): 303.
113. For all his devotion to the Saudi state and its religious scholars, al-Fiqi's intellectual background sometimes made the Wahhabis of Najd suspicious of him. Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, for instance, deplored the fact that al-Fiqi, like Rida, contradicted Ibn Taymiyya and denied the possibility that "the men of the unseen [*rijāl al-ghayb*]" could be jinns. See Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Āl al-Shaykh, *Fatāwā wa rasāʾil*, ed. Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim (Mecca: Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥukūma, 1979), 1:258. More recently, another Saudi scholar lambasted al-Fiqi's 1952 edition of a fourteenth-century Hanbali biographical dictionary, saying that al-Fiqi misread and distorted many passages and that he inexcusably harmed the writings of the *salaf*. See Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Sulaymān al-ʿUthaymīn (Riyadh: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 2005), 1:109–10.
114. *Umm al-qurā*, September 13, 1935, 4.
115. *Lisān al-dīn* 1, no. 6 (1946): 16, 19; al-ʿAbdalī, *al-Masjid al-ḥaram*, 175, 180.
116. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Razzāq Ḥamza, *Ẓulumāt Abī Rayya amāma aḍwāʾ al-sunna al-muḥammadiyya* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafiyya, 1958), 236–37.
117. Al-Hilali and Hamza did not see eye to eye with the emir of Medina, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Ibrahim (the brother of Muhammad ibn Ibrahim). For details, see al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 168–70.
118. Riḍā, *al-Mukhtār*, 1:28, 40.

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119. al-Hilālī, "Dīwān," 104. Rida's disciples, however, had no leverage. Opposition from the top Najdi ʿulama is what appears to have convinced the king to cancel the holiday in 1931. See ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim al-ʿĀṣimī, ed., *al-Durar al-saniyya fī-l-ajwiba al-najdiyya*, 6th ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-Qāsim, 1996), 5:62–64.
120. al-Hilālī, "Dīwān," 104.
121. Ibid., 152.
122. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 1, no. 3 (1957): 25.
123. al-Hilālī, "Dīwān," 153.
124. Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ḥakīm al-shahīr bi-Tafsīr al-Manār*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1949), 10:424–25; *al-Fatḥ* 11 (1937): 838; *al-Manār* 35 (1940): 712.
125. *al-Manār* 27 (1926): 276. Parentheses in the original.
126. Riḍā, *al-Khilāfa*, 62; *al-Manār* 26 (1926): 789. See also *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil al-najdiyya* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1930), 4:481, 509, where Rida presents the nineteenth-century *qāḍī* Aba Butayn (d. 1865) as "the scholar of the Salafi group [*ʿālim al-ṭāʾifa al-salafiyya*]" in Najd.
127. *al-Manār* 28 (1927): 4.
128. Riḍā, *al-Manār wa-l-Azhar*, 43.

3. Purist Salafism in the Age of Islamic Nationalism

1. *al-Shihāb* 2 (1926): 524–26.
2. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1929): 332.
3. Muḥammad Bahjat al-Bīṭār, *al-Riḥla al-najdiyya al-ḥijāziyya* (Damascus: al-Maṭbaʿat al-Jadīda, 1967), 47. There is also an interesting passage in a fragment of a 1922 letter from Ibn Maniʿ to Ibn Sahman, but the meaning ascribed to *salafiyya* is debatable. See Sulaymān ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Kharāshī, *Taʿaqqubāt al-shaykh al-ʿallāma Sulaymān ibn Saḥmān ʿalā baʿḍ taʿlīqāt al-shaykh Rashīd Riḍā* (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣamīʿī, 2009), 118, 233.
4. *al-Manār* 25 (1924): 629. The *suggestion* that Salafis were Muslims who opposed *taqlīd* had been made prior to the 1920s, but it was highly unusual. See *al-Manār* 9 (1907): 941.
5. *al-Manār* 28 (1927): 439. He was also introduced as a Salafi in *al-Shihāb* 3 (1927): 349–50.
6. Rashīd Riḍā, *Yusr al-islām wa uṣūl al-tashrīʿ al-ʿāmm* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1928), 77.
7. Abū Yaʿlā al-Zawāwī, *al-Islām al-ṣaḥīḥ* (Beni Messous, Algeria: Manshūrāt al-Ḥibr, 2008), 77.
8. In the Arab East, the fact that Ashʿari scholars insisted that their theological nemeses should not be called *Salafis* indicates that the adherents to neo-Hanbali theology had been successful in claiming the expression *madhhab al-salaf* for themselves. One example from the early 1930s is Yūsuf al-Dijwī, *Maqālāt wa fatāwā al-shaykh Yūsuf al-Dijwī* (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿĀmma li-Shuʾūn al-Maṭābiʿ al-Amīriyya, 1981), 1:203, 211.

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9. In 1928, one Algerian reformer defined Salafism as an expression meaning "to be molded by the ethics of the *salaf* [*al-takhalluq bi-akhlāq al-salaf*]" from the first three generations. *al-Shihāb* 4 (1928): 148.
10. For a biographical sketch of Munir, see Muḥammad Muṭīʿ al-Ḥāfiẓ and Nizār Abāẓa, *Tārīkh ʿulamāʾ Dimashq fī-l-qarn al-rābiʿ ʿashr al-hijrī* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1991), 3:203–5.
11. Muḥammad Munīr ʿAbduh Aghā al-Dimashqī, *Numūdhaj min al-aʿmāl al-khayriyya fī Idārat al-ṭibāʿa al-munīriyya* (Cairo: Idārat al-Ṭibāʿa al-Munīriyya, 1939), 12.
12. Ibid., 15.
13. Ibid., 16. Munir labeled Rashid Rida a Salafi, even though the latter was critical of the *madhhab*s. See ibid., 302. Rida also labeled Munir a Salafi in *al-Manār* 24 (1923): 160.
14. *al-Aṭlas* 1, no. 24 (1937): 1.
15. Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 22–23.
16. *al-Fatḥ* 12 (1938): 944.
17. Previously, King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz had also declined an invitation to attend the General Islamic Congress in Jerusalem in 1931 for fear of getting involved in discussions that would prejudice Saudi interests. Basheer M. Nafi, "The General Islamic Congress of Jerusalem Reconsidered," *Muslim World* 86 (1996): 259.
18. *al-Fatḥ* 11 (1937): 838.
19. The English version of the document is reproduced in Anita L. P. Burdett, *Islamic Movements in the Arab World, 1913–1966* (Slough, UK: Archive Editions, 1998), 2:486.
20. Nafi, "The General Islamic Congress," 266–67. Among other things, Rida's report insisted on the unicity of God's lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*) and the unicity of divinity (*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*) and lamented the division between traditional schools of Islamic law. For the relevant parts of the report and the reaction of its critics, see *al-Manār* 32 (1932): 204, 288–89.
21. *La Nation arabe* 5 (1935): 448–49.
22. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa ilā Allāh fī aqṭār mukhtalifa* (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Ḥadītha, n.d.), 181.
23. Jamal Malik, "The Making of a Council: The Nadwat al-ʿUlamâ," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 144 (1994): 60–91.
24. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Nadwat al-ʿUlama" (Zaraful-Islam Khan). See also the article by Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi in *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 17, nos. 2–3 (1975): 61.
25. Aḥmad al-Sharabāṣī, *Rashīd Riḍā ṣāḥib al-Manār: ʿaṣruhu wa ḥayātuhu wa maṣādir thaqāfatihi* (Cairo: n.p., 1970), 151.
26. *Majallat al-Jāmiʿa al-salafiyya* 11, no. 5 (1979): 11.
27. Henri Laoust, "Le réformisme orthodoxe des 'Salafiya' et les caractères généraux de son orientation actuelle," *Revue des études islamiques* 6 (1932): 206.
28. *al-Fatḥ* 12 (1937): 422.
29. There was some debate among like-minded Islamic nationalists over the extent to which religious diversity might be tolerated. The views of Mustafa Ahmad al-Rifaʿi

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al-Labban, an Egyptian activist who previously gravitated toward Rida, were quite similar to those of al-Hilali. See *al-Fatḥ* 12 (1937): 516–17. For a more religiously flexible approach by a Syrian activist, see *al-Fatḥ* 12 (1938): 799–801, 812–13. For a refutation of Islamic nationalism by an Algerian assimilationist who saw it as a Muslim equivalent to international communism, see the declarations of Dr. Muhammad ibn Jallul (Mohammed Benjelloul) in *al-Baṣāʾir* 1, no. 33 (1936): 4–5.

30. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Sabb al-Qādiyāniyyīn li-l-islām wa tasmīyatuhu al-shajara al-malʿūna wa jawābuhum* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafiyya, 1933), 5.
31. *al-Fatḥ* 7 (1932): 232.
32. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 180.
33. Ibid., 181.
34. Jan-Peter Hartung, "The Nadwat al-ʿUlamaʾ: Chief Patron of *Madrasa* Education in India and a Turntable to the Arab World," in *Islamic Education, Diversity, and National Identity:* Dīnī Madāris *in India Post 9/11*, ed. Jan-Peter Hartung and Helmut Reifeld (New Delhi: SAGE, 2006), 144.
35. *al-Shihāb* 11 (1935): 229–31.
36. *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 1, no. 5 (1932): 37; *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 2 (1933): 237; *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 3 (1934): 239; *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 4 (1935): 149–52.
37. *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 3 (1934): 300.
38. *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 4 (1935): 282–84.
39. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928): 13.
40. *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 1, no. 1 (1932): 10–14; Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Barāhīn al-injīliyya ʿalā anna ʿĪsā ʿalayhi al-salām dākhil fī-l-ʿubūdiyya wa lā ḥaẓẓ lahu fī-l-ulūhiyya* (Mecca: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1973), 23.
41. *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 3 (1934): 142.
42. *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 1, no. 6 (1932): 18–19.
43. *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 3 (1934): 141–42. See also Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Isfār ʿan al-ḥaqq fī masʾalat al-ḥijāb wa-l-sufūr* (Bombay: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1933), 1–4.
44. *al-Ṣirāṭ al-sawī*, October 30, 1933, 3, 6; *al-Ṣirāṭ al-sawī*, November 6, 1933, 8.
45. Shakīb Arslān, *al-Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā aw ikhāʾ arbaʿīn sana* (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat Ibn Zaydūn, 1937), 722; al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 188, 195–96.
46. *al-Fatḥ* 12 (1937): 538–39.
47. *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 3 (1934): 141.
48. *Lisān al-dīn* 1, no. 6 (1946): 29–32; *Lisān al-dīn* 4, no. 1 (1950): 7.
49. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, introduction to *Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb: muṣliḥ maẓlūm wa muftarā ʿalayhi*, by Masʿūd al-Nadwī, trans. ʿAbd al-ʿAlīm ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Bastawī (Medina: Idārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Nashr bi-l-Jamāʿa, 1984), 6–7.
50. Masood Alam Nadvi, *Mohammad bin Abdul Wahhab: A Slandered Reformer*, trans. M. Rafiq Khan (Vanarasi, India: Idaratul Buhoosil Islamia, 1983), 3.
51. For his views on creed, see ibid., 88–90.
52. *Lisān al-dīn* 5, no. 9 (1951): 20–21.
53. *al-Ḥurriyya*, August 17, 1942, 1.
54. *al-Fatḥ* 8 (1934): 847.

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55. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 10, no. 8 (1967): 28–29.
56. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Nadwī, *Mudhakkirāt sāʾiḥ fī-l-sharq al-ʿarabī* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1975), 60.
57. Ibid., 226.
58. Ibid., 30.
59. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Sirāj al-munīr fī tanbīh Jamāʿat al-Tablīgh ʿalā akhṭāʾihim* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1979), 70–71.
60. ʿAbd al-Awwāl ibn Ḥammād al-Anṣārī, *al-Majmūʿ fī tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-muḥaddith al-shaykh Ḥammād al-Anṣārī wa sīratihi wa aqwālihi wa raḥalātihi* (Medina: n.p., 2002), 2:601.
61. Shams al-Dīn al-Salafī al-Afghānī, *Juhūd ʿulamāʾ al-ḥanafiyya fī ibṭāl ʿaqāʾid al-qubūriyya* (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 1996), 1:72–74.
62. Yūsuf al-Dijwī, *Ṣawāʿiq min nār fī-l-radd ʿalā ṣāḥib al-Manār* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Taqaddum al-Tijāriyya, 1932), 35.
63. I discuss another case in Henri Lauzière, "The Construction of *Salafiyya*: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 381–82.
64. Rashīd Riḍā, *Nidāʾ li-l-jins al-laṭīf*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1947), 1. A number of Rida's associates repeated the formula, such as Muhammad ʿAbd al-Salam al-Shuqayri, who founded the Salafiyya Association in Egypt. See *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 1, no. 2 (1937): 19. See also Muḥammad Bahjat al-Bīṭār, *Kalimāt wa aḥādīth*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1982), 68.
65. ʿAlī al-Ṭanṭāwī, *Fuṣūl islāmiyya* (Damascus: Dār al-Daʿwa, 1960), 76. This is a reprint of a 1939 article. See also ʿAlī al-Ṭanṭāwī, *Fuṣūl fī-l-daʿwa wa-l-iṣlāḥ* (Jeddah: Dār al-Manāra, 2008), 43. This is a reprint of a 1946 article. Al-Tantawi also claimed that there was a correct form of Sufism, which Salafis did not need to oppose.
66. Salāma Mūsā, *al-Balāgha al-ʿaṣriyya wa-l-lugha al-ʿarabiyya*, 3rd ed. (n.p.: Salāma Mūsā li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1964), 9. The book was originally published in 1945.
67. *al-Risāla* 13, no. 627 (1945): 715–17. This language is strikingly similar to that of Arnold Toynbee, who discussed the notions "Archaism" and "Futurism" at great length in the sixth volume of his *A Study of History*, published in 1939. I found no way of ascertaining whether this work had any influence on Musa or al-ʿAqqad in the 1940s, but both men knew English very well and were familiar with British intellectual production. It is worth noting that the 1961 Arabic translation of *A Study of History* renders the word *Archaism* as *al-salafiyya* and *Futurism* as *al-mustaqbaliyya*. See Arnūld Tūynbī, *Mukhtaṣar Dirāsa li-l-tārīkh*, trans. Fuʾād Muḥammad Shibl (Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1961), 2:451–53.
68. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 1, no. 5 (1937): 14, 28; *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 1, no. 9 (1938): 11; *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 3, no. 2 (1939): 34; *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 4, no. 4 (1940): 48; *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 9, no. 2 (1945): 52.
69. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 2, no. 19 (1938): 1.
70. *al-Majalla al-salafiyya* 2 (1918): 1.
71. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 2, no. 23 (1939): 1.

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72. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 3, no. 2 (1939): 68.
73. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 2, no. 23 (1939): 37.
74. Three years earlier al-Fiqi published a pro-Wahhabi book in which he praised the Wahhabi movement for its Salafi theology and its impact since the eighteenth century. See Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī, *Athar al-daʿwa al-wahhābiyya fī-l-iṣlāḥ al-dīnī wa-l-ʿumrānī fī jazīrat al-ʿarab wa ghayrihā* (Cairo: n.p., 1936), 15, 31, 100–1. Abu Rayya, for his part, dismissed the historical significance of the Wahhabis.
75. *al-Risāla* 8, no. 373 (1940): 1358.
76. *al-Fatḥ* 11 (1937): 1101.
77. G. H. A. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 38–43.
78. Examples include *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 16 (1951): 41–44, where ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Wakil (d. 1970) explains that Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya has adopted a faith-based conception of nationalism and that Egypt was but one part of the greater Islamic nation. See also *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 16 (1952): 123–28.
79. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 2, no. 21 (1939): 45.
80. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 1, no. 1 (1937): 2–3.
81. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 2, no. 24 (1939): 37.
82. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 1, no. 9 (1938): 11.
83. Francine Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste à l'Université al-Azhar: oeuvre et pensée de Mustafâ al-Marâghî (1881–1945)* (Paris: Karthala, 2005), 121–37.
84. Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 161.
85. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Dāwūd, *al-Jamʿiyyāt al-islāmiyya fī Miṣr wa dawruhā fī nashr al-daʿwa al-islāmiyya* (Cairo: al-Zahrāʾ li-l-Iʿlām al-ʿArabī, 1992), 126, 135–36, 142–44.
86. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Khaṭṭāb al-Subkī, *Itḥāf al-kāʾināt bi-bayān madhhab al-salaf wa-l-khalaf fī-l-mutashābihāt* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Istiqāma, 1932), 4. I provide a brief overview of the debate about *tafwīḍ al-maʿnā* in chap. 1, n. 9.
87. Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 54.
88. al-Subkī, *Itḥāf al-kāʾināt*, 5.
89. *al-Manār* 33 (1933): 676–77.
90. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 3, no. 2 (1939): 32–35.
91. ʿAbdallāh ʿAlī al-Qaṣīmī, *al-Ṣirāʿ bayna al-islām wa-l-wathaniyya*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: n.p., 1982): 2:217–69.
92. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām al-Shuqayrī, *al-Sunan wa-l-mubtadaʿāt al-mutaʿalliqa bi-l-adhkār wa-l-ṣalawāt*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, n.d.), 34–37, 167, 260–64.
93. Dāwūd, *al-Jamʿiyyāt al-islāmiyya*, 195.
94. *al-Manār* 33 (1933): 679.
95. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 4, no. 5 (1940): 34–37; *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 4, no. 7 (1940): 32–33.
96. He praises Salafi theology in *al-Zahrāʾ* 3 (1926): 81–99.
97. *al-Fatḥ* 10 (1936): 998, 1000.

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98. Mario Turchetti, "Religious Concord and Political Tolerance in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991): 18.
99. See the article by Abu Layth al-Nadwi about Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi (d. 1762) in *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 3 (1934): 256.
100. *al-Ḍiyāʾ* 2 (1933): 79.
101. Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi, *Tārīkh al-daʿwa al-islāmiyya fī-l-Hind* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.), 209–15. He completed the book in 1951.
102. For Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi's discussion of Iqbal in a section devoted to Salafism in India, see ibid., 215–23. For relevant details about Iqbal's thought, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing: A Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 88–89; M. Reza Pirbhai, *Reconsidering Islam in a South Asian Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 258.

4. The Ironies of Modernity and the Advent of Modernist Salafism

1. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen, "Introduction: Angelus Novus?" in *Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 6.
2. A good example is the article titled "Kayfa dhalla al-muslimūn [How Muslims became inglorious]" by ʿAbd al-Zahir Abu al-Samh in *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 4, no. 10 (1940): 10–15.
3. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1929): 332.
4. John Voll, "Modern Movements in Islam," in *Innovation in Islam: Traditions and Contributions*, ed. Mehran Kamrava (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 224. I was present at the rather stormy conference in Doha, Qatar, where John Voll delivered a first version of this chapter on April 6, 2008. At the end of the panel, I introduced myself to the late Mohammad Arkoun, who was in attendance, and quickly realized that he was appalled by Voll's talk. "Have you heard how he speaks of modernity? [*Vous avez entendu comment il parle de la modernité?*]," Arkoun asked me in an incredulous tone. Given his lifelong struggle for an enlightened and emancipatory form of Islamic modernity, as well as his lack of sympathy for political Islam (which he regarded as intellectually weak), it is understandable that Arkoun scoffed at Voll's suggestion that the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaʿat-i Islami could be considered modern. The same goes for purist Salafis. If one defines modernity in a narrow sense as an inherently liberal-rationalist or secular process, then one can, of course, contend that all the purist Salafis of the mid-twentieth century were antimodern.
5. Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Āl al-Shaykh, *Fatāwā wa rasāʾil*, ed. Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim (Mecca: Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥukūma, 1979), 13:213.
6. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 1, no. 3 (1957): 26.
7. See the obituary by Burzine K. Waghmar, "Professor Annemarie Schimmel (April 7, 1922 to January 26, 2003)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 13 (2003): 377–79.

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8. Clement Moore Henry, "Postcolonial Dialectics of Civil Society," in *North Africa in Transition: State, Society, and Economic Transformation in the 1990s*, ed. Yahya H. Zoubir (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 13.
9. This statement, originally written in 1937, is from ʿAlī al-Ṭanṭāwī, *Fuṣūl islāmiyya* (Damascus: Dār al-Daʿwa, 1960), 43. Similar statements are discussed in Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 80–85.
10. ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, *al-Naqd al-dhātī* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿĀlamiyya, 1952), 119.
11. Ibid., 238.
12. Comité d'Action Marocaine, *Plan de réformes marocaines* (Paris: Imprimerie Labor, 1934), 56; ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, *ʿAqīda wa jihād* (Rabat: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Iqtiṣādiyya, 1960), 153.
13. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 162.
14. *al-Aṭlas* 1, no. 7 (1937): 3.
15. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa ilā Allāh fī aqṭār mukhtalifa* (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Ḥadītha, n.d.), 180–81.
16. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 1, no. 3 (1957): 25.
17. Umar Ryad, "A *Salafi* Student, Orientalist Scholarship, and Radio Berlin in Nazi Germany: Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and His Experiences in the West," in *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe: Muslim Activists and Thinkers*, ed. Götz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 112–13.
18. William L. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 39.
19. *al-Manār al-jadīd* 6 (2003): 144–54.
20. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West*, 126.
21. Muḥammad al-Majdhūb, *ʿUlamāʾ wa mufakkirūn ʿaraftuhum* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 1977), 1:183.
22. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West*, 65.
23. Shakīb Arslān, *Limādhā taʾakhkhara al-muslimūn wa limādhā taqaddama ghayruhum* (Cairo: al-Markaz al-Salafī li-l-Kitāb, 1981), 53–57.
24. Ibid., 62.
25. *al-Fatḥ* 6 (1931): 116. Henri Laoust noticed this review and mentioned al-Hilali in his famous 1932 article on the Salafis. Because al-Hilali was still in colonial India at the time, Laoust misidentified him as an Indian. See Henri Laoust, "Le réformisme orthodoxe des 'Salafiya' et les caractères généraux de son orientation actuelle," *Revue des études islamiques* 6 (1932): 206.
26. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West*, 115–16.
27. *al-Risāla* 3, no. 109 (1935): 1280. A decade earlier Arslan had noted that the Wahhabis called themselves Salafis—but not without suggesting that they exaggerated in matters of creed. See Lūthrūb Stūdārd, *Ḥāḍir al-ʿālam al-islāmī*, ed. Shakīb Arslān, trans. ʿAjjāj Nuwayhiḍ (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Salafiyya wa Maktabatuhā, 1924), 1:39.
28. Martin Kramer, *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival: The Politics of Ideas in the Middle East* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1996), 105.

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29. *al-Manār* 28 (1927): 638.
30. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1929): 445.
31. *Lisān al-dīn* 1, nos. 8–9 (1947): 6–7.
32. Ryad, "*Salafi* Student," 113.
33. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 1, no. 3 (1957): 25; al-Majdhūb, *ʿUlamāʾ wa mufakkirūn*, 1:188–89.
34. Paul E. Kahle, *Bonn University in Pre-Nazi and Nazi Times (1923–1939): Experiences of a German Professor* (London: n.p., 1945), 27, 34–35.
35. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Barāhīn al-injīliyya ʿalā anna ʿĪsā ʿalayhi al-salām dākhil fī-l-ʿubūdiyya wa lā ḥaẓẓ lahu fī-l-ulūhiyya* (Mecca: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1973), 34–38. Al-Hilali's fascination with transnational shortwave broadcasting and his stint as a speaker on Berlin Arab Radio must be understood as part of his unrelenting effort to promote Islamic nationalism. For an analysis of this episode in al-Hilali's life, see Henri Lauzière, "Islamic Nationalism Through the Airwaves: Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī's Encounter with Shortwave Radio, 1937–39," *Die Welt des Islams* 56 (forthcoming).
36. Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, *Die Einleitung zu al-Birunis Steinbuch* (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1941).
37. See al-Hilālī, *al-Barāhīn al-injīliyya*, 37, where he confesses that the topic was Kahle's idea.
38. Rudi Paret, *The Study of Arabic and Islam at German Universities: German Orientalists Since Theodor Nöldeke* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1968), 59.
39. Al-Hilali quotes Kahle's own recollections in Ibn al-Miʿmār al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-futuwwa*, ed. Muṣṭafā Jawād, Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm, Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, and Aḥmad Nājī al-Qaysī (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1958), 111–12.
40. One of his lost books pertained to the Ismaʿili Qarmatis. See M. S. Khan, "Al-Biruni and the Political History of India," *Oriens* 25 (1976): 90.
41. Yohanan Friedmann, "Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975): 215–16.
42. This fatwa was published piecemeal in a Tetouan newspaper over three consecutive days. For the most relevant sections, see *al-Ḥurriyya*, November 4, 1942, 1; *al-Ḥurriyya*, November 5, 1942, 1.
43. *al-Fatḥ* 14 (1939): 71–72. Compare with al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, ed. and trans. Edward Sachau (London: William H. Allen, 1879), xiii. Sachau writes that al-Biruni was a Muslim, though not a bigot, and that "he *inclined* towards the Shiʿa" (my emphasis).
44. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Dawāʾ al-shākkīn wa qāmiʿ al-mushakkikīn* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), 21–22; al-Majdhūb, *ʿUlamāʾ wa mufakkirūn*, 1:190–91.
45. ʿAbd al-Awwāl ibn Ḥammād al-Anṣārī, *al-Majmūʿ fī tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-muḥaddith al-shaykh Ḥammād al-Anṣārī wa sīratihi wa aqwālihi wa raḥalātihi* (Medina: n.p., 2002), 2:592.
46. Taqi ed-Din al-Hilali, "Die Kasten in Arabien," *Die Welt des Islams* 22 (1940): 102–10.
47. *al-Ḥurriyya*, July 9, 1942, 1. Al-Hilali also thought highly of Paul Kahle.
48. Karl Popper, "On the Sources of Knowledge and of Ignorance," in *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 11.

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49. Gabriel Monod, "M. Fustel de Coulanges," *Revue historique* 14, no. 41 (1889): 279.
50. *al-Fatḥ* 12 (1937): 227–28.
51. *al-Fatḥ* 12 (1938): 1068. See also *al-Fatḥ* 13 (1939): 972–73.
52. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Sulaymān ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥamīḍī, *al-Ṭuruq al-sharʿiyya li-ḥall al-mashākil al-zawjiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Salafiyya, 1983), 70, 77.
53. *al-Fatḥ* 13 (1938): 12.
54. *al-Fatḥ* 13 (1939): 973.
55. *al-Fatḥ* 11 (1937): 1068–70.
56. Ibid., 1169.
57. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 30, 38; *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 19, nos. 2–3 (1978): 54. Al-Hilali later confessed to a Moroccan scholar that he also acted as a translator during discussions that occurred in 1942 between al-Turris and Nazi agents who were ready to offer money and weapons. Abdelmajid Benjelloun, *Approches du colonialisme espagnol et du mouvement nationaliste marocain dans l'ex-Maroc khalifien* (Rabat: OKAD, 1988), 224.
58. Charles-Robert Ageron, "*L'Algérie algérienne*" *de Napoléon III à de Gaulle* (Paris: Sinbad, 1980), 198.
59. Ryad, "*Salafi* Student," 138.
60. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 38, 106; *Lisān al-dīn* 4, no. 3 (1950): 14–16.
61. Jean Wolf, *Les secrets du Maroc espagnol: l'épopée d'Abd-El-Khaleq Torrès, 1910–1970* (Paris: Balland, 1994), 133–35.
62. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥajwī, *al-Fikr al-sāmī fī tārīkh al-fiqh al-islāmī* (Fes: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Jadīda, 1931), 4:29, 200–1, where he refers to himself as a Salafi in creed and Maliki in law. See also his pro-Wahhabi article in *al-Ṣirāṭ al-sawī*, September 25, 1933, 3, in which he explains the notion of *madhhab al-salaf*. See also ʿAbdallāh Gannūn, *al-Nubūgh al-maghribī fī-l-adab al-ʿarabī*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1961), 1:123, where he makes a clear distinction between Ashʿari theology and Salafi theology.
63. *al-Zahrāʾ* 5 (1929): 370.
64. *al-Baṣāʾir* 1, no. 5 (1936): 8.
65. Ḥasnāʾ Dāwūd, ed., *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala bayna ʿAllāl al-Fāsī wa Muḥammad Dāwūd* (Rabat: Maṭbaʿat al-Maʿārif al-Jadīda, 2000), 114. On page 103, al-Fasi also speaks of "Salafism and its methods [*al-salafiyya wa manāhijihā*]."
66. Ibid., 96. The letter dates from September 1935.
67. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Zubayrī, *Ibn Juzay wa manhajuhu fī-l-tafsīr* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1987), 1:559–69.
68. ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, *Ḥadīth al-Maghrib fī-l-Mashriq* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿĀlamiyya, 1956), 4, 10, 27. This is the text of a talk that al-Fasi gave at al-Azhar sometime between 1952 and 1954.
69. ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, *al-Ḥarakāt al-istiqlāliyya fī-l-Maghrib al-ʿArabī* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Risāla, 1948), 153; ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, *Muḥāḍarāt fī-l-Maghrib al-ʿArabī mundhu al-ḥarb al-ʿālamiyya al-ūlā* (Cairo: Maʿhad al-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyya al-ʿĀliyya, 1955), 89, 113.
70. al-Fāsī, *Ḥadīth al-Maghrib*, 8.

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71. ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, *Aʿlām min al-Maghrib wa-l-Mashriq*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAlī al-Wadghīrī (Rabat: Muʾassasat ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, 2008), 153, 169.
72. al-Fāsī, *al-Naqd al-dhātī*, 239.
73. al-Fāsī, *Ḥadīth al-Maghrib*, 27–28.
74. Osman Amin, *Muhammad Abduh: essai sur ses idées philosophiques et religieuses* (Cairo: Imprimerie Misr, 1944), 230.
75. al-Fāsī, *al-Ḥarakāt al-istiqlāliyya*, 154.
76. Antonie Wessels, *A Modern Arabic Biography of Muḥammad: A Critical Study of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's* Ḥayāt Muḥammad (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 207–8. See also *La Nation arabe* 8 (1938): 862, where Dermenghem admits that he spoke to ʿAllal al-Fasi about Salafi reformism.
77. Émile Dermenghem, "Le Maroc religieux et l'évolution de l'islam," *Le Correspondant* 98, no. 1523 (1926): 685–86.
78. al-Fāsī, *al-Naqd al-dhātī*, 157, 245.
79. I mentioned al-Bahi's book in chapter 1. See the citation in ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, "Muhimmat ʿulamāʾ al-islām," in *Muḥāḍaratān ʿan muhimmat ʿulamāʾ al-islām* (Rabat: Maṭbaʿat al-Amaniyya, n.d.), 16. This is the text of a conference that al-Fasi gave in Morocco in 1959.
80. Douglas E. Ashford, *Political Change in Morocco* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 29–30.
81. Jamil Abun-Nasr, "The Salafiyya Movement in Morocco: The Religious Bases of the Moroccan Nationalist Movement," *St. Anthony's Papers* 16, no. 3 (1963): 90–105.
82. John P. Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Origins and Rise of Moroccan Nationalism, 1912–1944* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 119–34.
83. Henri Laoust, "La culture islamique," *La Bourse égyptienne* (special issue), February 15, 1933, unpaginated.
84. In most of what he wrote after 1932, Laoust switched to the expressions "Muslim modernism," "Islamic reformism," and "liberal modernism" to refer to ʿAbduh's movement of reform. He did not completely abandon his old understanding of *salafiyya*, but he used it only a handful of times and in a more hesitant manner. In 1933, for instance, he claimed that the Salafis were in fact the Wahhabi-inspired epigones of ʿAbduh, who formed the "right wing" of his reform party (an idea that, once again, Massignon had been the first to submit in 1925). In 1938, he also wrote that the term *salafiyya* was so elastic as to apply to both conservative and progressive reformers. Through his work on Ibn Taymiyya and medieval Hanbalis, Laoust appears to have realized that his 1932 article was overdone, especially with respect to al-Afghani and ʿAbduh. See Henri Laoust, "Le Caire et sa fonction dans l'islam contemporain," *L'Afrique française* 43, no. 6 (1933): 319; Henri Laoust, *Le califat dans la doctrine de Rašīd Riḍā* (Beirut: Mémoires de l'Institut Français de Damas, 1938), 247, 255. For Louis Massignon's distinction between right-wing "Salafis" and left-wing "Islahis," see *Revue du monde musulman* 59 (1925): 292.
85. *al-Fatḥ* 7 (1933): 566.
86. *al-Ḥurriyya*, October 6, 1942, 1.

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87. *al-Ḥurriyya*, October 7, 1942, 1.
88. *Lisān al-dīn* 1, no. 6 (1946): 1–13.
89. al-Fāsī, *al-Ḥarakāt al-istiqlāliyya*, 154.
90. *al-Ḥurriyya*, October 6, 1942, 1.
91. *al-Ḥurriyya*, August 8, 1942, 1. Contemporary purist Salafis usually adopt the same attitude toward this hadith.
92. One book devoted to prayer dates from that period. It is Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm fī ṣifat ṣalāt al-nabī al-karīm* (Tetouan: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Mahdiyya, 1945).
93. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 50, 74, 81, 103. In some instances, al-Hilali moved to the hinterland to find a drier climate. He was suffering from heavy asthma crises and tried to avoid coastal towns.
94. Ibid., 84–90.
95. The second book (Ibn Taymiyya's fatwa) was soon reedited. See Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Ḥarrānī [Ibn Taymiyya], *Ḥukm ziyārat al-qubūr wa-l-istinjād bi-l-maqbūr*, 2nd ed. (Tetouan: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Mahdiyya, 1947).
96. al-Hilālī, *al-Da ʿwa*, 48.
97. Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 171.
98. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Mukhtaṣar hadī al-khalīl fī-l-ʿaqāʾid wa ʿibādat al-jalīl*, 3rd ed. (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Ḥadītha, 1977), 27, 64.
99. *Lisān al-dīn* 1, no. 6 (1946): 2–4.
100. Muḥammad ibn al-Fāṭimī al-Sulamī, *Isʿāf al-ikhwān al-rāghibīn bi-tarājim thulla min ʿulamāʾ al-Maghrib al-muʿāṣirīn* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1992), 201–3.
101. Ibid., 404–5. See also Mohammed Tozy and Zakya Daoud, "Abdallah Guennoun ou le dernier des lettrés," *Lamalif* 188 (1987): 13–16; Mohammed Tozy, "Portrait d'un lettré de Tanger," in *Maroc: les signes de l'invisible*, ed. Jean-François Clément (Paris: Autrement, 1990), 112–16.
102. *al-Anwār* 33 (1953): 1–2.
103. Al-Fasi wrote about al-Hilali's achievements in *al-Aṭlas* 1, no. 1 (1937): 7–8, while al-Hilali praised al-Fasi in *al-Fatḥ* 12 (1938): 978.
104. One picture from 1946 shows him wearing a Western-style coat. See *al-ʿAlam*, September 8, 1987, 8. Other photos show him in a suit and a tie. Regarding his beard and al-Hilali's justification for not growing one at the time of his first return to Morocco, see al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 38–39.
105. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 35. This is according to al-Hilali's recollections.
106. *al-Ḥurriyya*, June 11, 1942, 2.
107. *Lisān al-dīn* 1, no. 3 (1946): 2–11.
108. A full translation was later published in book form. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Madaniyyat al-muslimīn fī Isbāniyā*, 2nd ed. (Casablanca: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1985).
109. *Lisān al-dīn* 1, no. 5 (1946): 38–39.
110. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 99.
111. *Lisān al-dīn* 6, no. 10 (1952): 7–10.
112. See al-Hilali's comments in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-futuwwa*, 104, 112.

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5. Searching for a Raison d'Être in the Postindependence Era

1. See the articles reprinted in ʿĀdil al-Sayyid, ed., *al-Ḥākimiyya wa-l-siyāsa al-sharʿiyya ʿinda shuyūkh Jamāʿat Anṣār al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Ibāna, 2009), 119–22.
2. Ibid., 164–66, 187.
3. Ibid., 31; *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 15 (1951): 476, 545–48.
4. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Wakīl, *Muftarayāt wa ḍalālāt bi-ṣūrat ʿibādāt*, ed. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī (Amman: al-Dār al-Athariyya, 2009), 13–14, 33–34.
5. *al-Ṣirāṭ al-sawī*, October 16, 1933, 4. The author was Muḥammad al-Saʿīd al-Zāhirī.
6. Muḥammad Sulṭān al-Maʿṣūmī al-Khujandī, *Tanbīh al-nubalāʾ min al-ʿulamāʾ ilā qawl Ḥāmid al-Fiqī inna al-malāʾika ghayr ʿuqalāʾ* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafiyya, 1954–55), 3–5, 9, 23, 28–30, 49.
7. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, *Baynī wa bayna al-shaykh Ḥāmid al-Fiqī* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1955), 7.
8. Ibid., 3–14.
9. Ibid., 21–22.
10. Ibid., 22.
11. Mohamed Tozy, *Monarchie et islam politique au Maroc*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1999), 135–42.
12. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 1, no. 3 (1957): 24.
13. In the 1940s, al-Hilali reportedly wrote three poems attacking a Moroccan Sufi shaykh. He named them V1, V2, and V3, alluding to the well-known missiles Nazi Germany produced during the Second World War. The third poem was even deadlier than Hitler's powerful weapon, al-Hilali wrote, because, unlike Britain, his Sufi opponent would not recover from the attack. See Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa ilā Allāh fī aqṭār mukhtalifa* (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Ḥadītha, n.d.), 53, 55.
14. Olivier Roy, *L'islam mondialisé* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 134.
15. *al-Bayyina* 1, no. 1 (1962): 74–93. Al-Hilali occasionally criticized democracy, socialism, and communism, but he did so mostly during the 1930s.
16. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 114, 123–24.
17. Ibid., 191–92; Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, "Dīwān al-shiʿr" (unpublished typescript), 123.
18. Hanna Batatu, *The Egyptian, Syrian, and Iraqi Revolutions: Some Observations on Their Underlying Causes and Social Characters* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 1984), 5–7.
19. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 18, nos. 7–8 (1977): 18.
20. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Dawāʾ al-shākkīn wa qāmiʿ al-mushakkikīn* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), i.
21. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 118.
22. He taught in several academic departments, including those of literature, *sharīʿa*, and education. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Qabsa min anwār al-waḥī* (Rabat: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1985), 3–4.

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23. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 19, nos. 2–3 (1978): 53; *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 25 (1982): 122; al-Hilālī, *Dawāʾ al-shākkīn*, ii.
24. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 116.
25. Majid Khadduri, *Republican ʿIraq: A Study in ʿIraqi Politics Since the Revolution of 1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 215.
26. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 1, nos. 4–5 (1957): 19–20.
27. He recounts the meeting in Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Qurrat al-ʿayn fī madḥ al-malikayn* (n.p.: n.p., 1979), 4–7.
28. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 204.
29. Tozy, *Monarchie*, 110.
30. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ṣaḥrāwī, *Shaykh al-islām Muḥammad ibn al-ʿArabī al-ʿAlawī* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribiyya, 1965), 101–3.
31. Pierre Vermeren, *Histoire du Maroc depuis l'indépendance* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002), 31; Malika Zeghal, *Les islamistes marocains: le défi à la monarchie* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), 76–77.
32. One such photo is reprinted in Moha Khettouch, *Cheikh al Islam Mohamed Belarabi Alaoui: le néosalafisme et l'éthique dans la vie d'un grand Alem* (Rabat: Dar al-Qalam, 2003), 383.
33. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Wardīghī, *al-Munāḍil shaykh al-islām Muḥammad ibn al-ʿArabī al-ʿAlawī, 1880–1964: ḥayātuhu wa jihāduhu* (Rabat: al-Hilāl al-ʿArabī, 1996), 42–44.
34. Zeghal, *Les islamistes marocains*, 62–63.
35. ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, *Difāʿ ʿan al-sharīʿa* (Rabat: Maṭābiʿ al-Risāla, 1966), 4–5.
36. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 31–32; *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 6, no. 5 (1963): 31.
37. From October 1956 until 1961, this ministry (if it can be called that) had no ties to the government and was under the direct control of the Palace.
38. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 38, 49, 204–5. For his contacts with the imam of Erfoud, see Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Ḥusām al-māḥiq li-kull mushrik wa munāfiq*, 2nd ed. (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1982), 9.
39. ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, *Raʾī muwāṭin* (Rabat: Muʾassasat ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, 1985), 269–70.
40. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 205.
41. See *al-Irshād* 1, no. 1 (1967): 17.
42. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 49–50, 209.
43. Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Mūsā and Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥamad, eds., *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala bayna al-shaykh Ibn Bāz wa-l-ʿulamāʾ* (Riyadh: Dār Ibn Khuzayma, 2007), 84–127.
44. Ibid., 318–21.
45. Mohamed Tozy, "Islam and the State," in *Polity and Society in Contemporary North Africa*, ed. I. William Zartman and William Mark Habeeb (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 107.
46. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 34. On the connection between the Palace and this *mawsim*, see Zeghal, *Les islamistes marocains*, 86.
47. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 210–11.

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48. The time of prayer in Meknes is an issue that continued to preoccupy him until the late 1970s. See Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Awqāt al-ṣalāt ʿan al-nabī* (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Ḥadītha, n.d.).
49. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 208.
50. He admits that he annoyed the authorities in other circumstances. See *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 4, no. 1 (1960): 25–26.
51. Author's interview with ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Benabdallah, Rabat, Morocco (June 15, 2005). Benabdallah worked for the Ministry of Education and was director of higher education and scientific research from 1958 to 1961. He was the one who hired al-Hilali in 1959 at Gannun's recommendation.
52. al-Hilālī, *Dawāʾ al-shākkīn*, ii.
53. Jean-Louis Miège, "Charles-André Julien et la création de la faculté des lettres de Rabat," *Revue Maroc-Europe* 12 (1999–2000): 152–57.
54. Abdallah Laroui, *Le Maroc et Hassan II: un témoignage* (Cap-Rouge, Québec: Presses Inter Universitaires, 2005), 78.
55. Zeghal, *Les islamistes marocains*, 64–67, 73–74, 81–83.
56. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 7, no. 7 (1964): 4.
57. Ibid., 2–3.
58. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 212.
59. Author's interview with ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Benabdallah, Rabat, Morocco (June 15, 2005).
60. "L'affaire des bahaïstes," *Confluent* 36 (1963): 968, 971–75.
61. One critic noted that al-Fasi had previously conceded the right of a Muslim to convert to Judaism. Ibid., 976. See also Mohamed Tozy, "Champ et contre-champ politico-religieux au Maroc" (PhD diss., Université Aix-Marseille, 1984), 90. Note that the Ministry of Habous changed its name twice between 1956 and 1963.
62. *Le Monde*, August 10, 1962, 3.
63. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 6, no. 5 (1963): 30.
64. Ibid., 32.
65. Rīnīh Ḥabashī, "al-ʿAwāʾiq al-nafsāniyya li-l-takhṭīṭ," *Ṣaḥīfa al-takhṭīṭ al-tarbawī fī-l-bilād al-ʿarabiyya* 2, no. 5 (1964): 37–47. This is the version that al-Hilali read, but the text was originally written in French.
66. al-Hilālī, *Dawāʾ al-shākkīn*, 84.
67. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 10, no. 2 (1966): 38.
68. al-Hilālī, *Dawāʾ al-shākkīn*, iii, 123.
69. Ibid., 132.
70. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 25 (1982): 122. In the original articles, he mentions receiving letters of support from only one admirer in Erfoud in Morocco and another in Baghdad.
71. al-Hilālī, *Dawāʾ al-shākkīn*, 92.
72. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 214.
73. Stéphane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, trans. George Holoc (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 41–46.

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74. al-Hilālī, *Dawāʾ al-shākkīn*, iii. Al-Hilali was evidently trying to market himself and his work. It was he who first approached the Saudi ambassador in Rabat and sent him the articles.
75. Muḥammad Ḥamad Khiḍr, *al-Dāʿiyya al-salafī al-shaykh Saʿdī Yāsīn, 1307–1396/1887–1976* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1980), 9, 12, 23, 26, 56–57, 75.
76. ʿAbd al-Razzāq ʿAfīfī, *Fatāwā wa rasāʾil*, ed. Walīd ibn Idrīs ibn Mansī (Riyadh: Dār al-Faḍīla, 1997), 1:41.
77. Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Sayyid Aḥmad, *al-Shaykh al-ʿallāma ʿAbd al-Razzāq ʿAfīfī: ḥayātuhu al-ʿilmiyya wa juhūduhu al-daʿwiyya wa āthāruhu al-ḥamīda* (Riyadh: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1996), 1:112, 165, 173–74, 176; 2:756; ʿAbdallāh Āl Bassām, *ʿUlamāʾ Najd khilāla thamāniyat qurūn*, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1998), 3:275–79.
78. Ali Merad, *Le réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940: essai d'histoire religieuse et sociale* (Paris: Mouton, 1967), 97–98, 100–1. On the modernist aspects of al-ʿUqbi's work, see James McDougall, "The *Shabiba Islamiyya* of Algiers: Education, Authority, and Colonial Control, 1921–57," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24 (2004): 149–51. Al-ʿUqbi was a good friend of Louis Massignon.
79. Aḥmad Maryūsh, *al-Shaykh al-Ṭayyib al-ʿUqbī wa dawruhu fī-l-ḥaraka al-waṭaniyya al-jazāʾiriyya* (Algiers: Dār Ḥūma, 2007), 347–56, 473.
80. Muḥammad al-Majdhūb, *ʿUlamāʾ wa mufakkirūn ʿaraftuhum* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 1977), 1:25–27, 29–31.
81. Stéphane Lacroix, "Between Revolution and Apoliticism: Nasir al-Din al-Albani and His Impact on the Shaping of Contemporary Salafism," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 63–67.
82. Gregory Mann and Baz Lecocq, "Between Empire, *Umma* and the Muslim Third World: The French Union and African Pilgrims to Mecca, 1946–1958," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27 (2007): 365–81.
83. *al-Hadī al-nabawī* 18 (1954): 214–16.
84. Muḥammad ibn al-Fāṭimī al-Sulamī, *Isʿāf al-ikhwān al-rāghibīn bi-tarājim thulla min ʿulamāʾ al-Maghrib al-muʿāṣirīn* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1992), 287.
85. Mohamed Tozy, "Représentation/intercession: les enjeux de pouvoir dans les 'champs politiques désamorcés' au Maroc," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 28 (1989): 155.
86. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Aḥmad Khāliṣ, "Jawānib min shakhṣiyyat al-shaykh Muḥammad al-Makkī al-Nāṣirī," in *Faḍīlat al-shaykh al-ʿallāma Muḥammad al-Makkī al-Nāṣirī: jihād al-fikr wa-l-dīn wa-l-taḥrīr* (Rabat: Manshūrāt Jamʿiyyat Ribāṭ al-Fatḥ, 2004), 113–16.
87. al-Sulamī, *Isʿāf*, 149, 399.
88. Quoted in Mohamed Tozy, "Monopolisation de la production symbolique et hiérarchisation du champ politico-religieux au Maroc," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 18 (1979): 224. Brackets in the original.
89. Mohamed El Mansour, "Salafis and Modernists in the Moroccan Nationalist Movement," in *Islamism and Secularism in North Africa*, ed. John Ruedy (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 69.

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90. ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, *Ḥadīth al-Maghrib fī-l-Mashriq* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿĀlamiyya, 1956), 27.
91. ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, *Manhaj al-istiqlāliyya*, 2nd ed. (Rabat: Maṭbaʿat al-Risāla, 1999), 8, 44–45, 115–16.
92. For a few examples, see Saʿīd Binsaʿīd al-ʿAlawī, *al-Ijtihād wa-l-taḥdīth: dirāsa fī uṣūl al-fikr al-salafī fī-l-Maghrib*, 2nd ed. (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 2001); ʿAbd al-Jalīl Bāddū, *al-Salafiyya wa-l-iṣlāḥ* (Tangier: Silīkī Ikhwān, 2007).
93. Muḥammad al-Rājī, "ʿAbbās al-Jirārī: al-salafiyya al-maghribiyya al-yawm laysat ka-salafiyyat ams," *Hespress*, February 27, 2014, www.hespress.com/orbites/146741.html (accessed 03/06/14). On the changing perceptions of Moroccan Salafism following the May 2003 bombings, see Henri Lauzière, "The Religious Dimension of Islamism: Sufism, Salafism, and Politics in Morocco," in *Islamist Politics in the Middle East: Movements and Change*, ed. Samer Shehata (London: Routledge, 2012), 88–106.

6. The Triumph and Ideologization of Purist Salafism

1. John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 69.
2. While purist Salafis continued to insist that Salafis should not be called Wahhabis, in doing so they, too, linked the two names and inadvertently contributed to the conflation. A good example is Abū Bakr Jābir al-Jazāʾirī, *Kamāl al-umma fī ṣalāḥ ʿaqīdatihā* (Medina: Maṭābiʿ al-Rashīd, 1983), 14, 17, 22.
3. Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fizāzī, *ʿUmalāʾ lā ʿulamāʾ: khudū ḥidhrakum* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1997). Al-Fizazi, born in 1950, is a purist Salafi from northern Morocco. His book criticizes Muhammad al-Maghrawi, another Moroccan purist Salafi with closer ties to al-Hilali and Saudi Arabia.
4. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 175; Mariam Abou Zahab, "Salafism in Pakistan: The Ahl-e Hadith Movement," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 133.
5. The book is Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *al-Salafiyya: marḥala zamaniyya mubāraka lā madhhab islāmī*, 2nd ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), originally published in 1988. One critique is Ṣāliḥ ibn Fawzān al-Fawzān, *Taʿqībāt ʿalā kitāb al-salafiyya laysat madhhaban*, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan li-l-Nashr, 1990). See also the book review by Muhammad Fariz Mankhisi in *ʿĀlam al-kutub* 14 (1993): 178–91.
6. *al-Salafiyya* 1, no. 1 (1994): 1, 34–42, 57–69. For the analysis of a similar journal titled *Salafy* and published in Indonesia between 1995 and 2000, see Michael Laffan, "National Crisis and the Representation of Traditional Sufism in Indonesia: The Periodicals *Salafy* and *Sufi*," in *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, ed. Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 151–62.
7. Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 399–400.

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8. Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 47.
9. Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qurʾan in the English Language: A Summarized Version of al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir with Comments from Sahih al-Bukhari* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1996), 2–3; *Majallat al-Jāmiʿa al-islāmiyya* 3, no. 4 (1971), accessible from the website of the Islamic University in Medina at http://docportal.iu.edu.sa/iumag/pdf/694.pdf (accessed 03/28/2014).
10. *al-Fatḥ* 7 (1932): 232.
11. Jacques Jomier, *Le commentaire coranique du Manâr: tendances modernes de l'exégèse coranique en Égypte* (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1954), 344.
12. *al-Waʿī al-islāmī* 7, no. 83 (1971): 57.
13. *al-Manār* 11 (1908): 271.
14. Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Search for Beauty in Islam: A Conference of the Books* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 194.
15. The details in questions come from selected hadith material. See al-Hilali and Khan, *Interpretation of the Meanings*, 462, 557; Abou El Fadl, *The Search for Beauty*, 194–202.
16. For an example dating from 1971, see Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa ilā Allāh fī aqṭār mukhtalifa* (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Ḥadītha, n.d.), 195. See also Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Mukhtaṣar hadī al-khalīl fī-l-ʿaqāʾid wa ʿibādat al-jalīl*, 3rd ed. (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Ḥadītha, 1977), 27; Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Ṣiyānat al-ʿirḍ: lā dīn wa lā sharaf illā bi-ṣawn al-ʿirḍ* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1981), 7–10.
17. al-Hilali and Khan, *Interpretation of the Meanings*, 3; Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari: Arabic-English* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997), 1:3. Khan started working on the translation of al-Bukhari in the 1960s in Saudi Arabia.
18. Al-Hilali's logic, however, is not always easy to follow. He wavers about the reliability of the Gospel as a revealed text but never engages the Muslim notion of biblical alteration (*taḥrīf*). So although he strives to use textual "proofs" from the Gospel itself, he also claims that most of the Gospel cannot be trusted.
19. Umar Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity: A Critical Reading of the Works of Muhammad Rashid Rida* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Simon A. Wood, *Christian Criticisms, Islamic Proofs: Rashid Rida's Modernist Defense of Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008).
20. I borrow the notion of adequacy from William Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions* (London: Routledge, 1991), 138.
21. Wood, *Christian Criticisms*, 44–46.
22. al-Hilali and Khan, *Interpretation of the Meanings*, 878.
23. *Majallat al-Jāmiʿa al-islāmiyya* 2, no. 2 (1969), http://docportal.iu.edu.sa/iumag/pdf/298.pdf (accessed 03/29/2014).
24. *Majallat Dār al-ḥadīth al-ḥasaniyya* 1 (1979): 87, 90–93. Al-Hilali seems to have understood the term *unique* literally. A report that comes from only two different routes

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of transmission, he maintains, can be deemed *mutawātir* (massively transmitted). However, Muslim scholars often require a higher number of transmissions and deny that single reports yield certain knowledge. For a review, see Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Sunna: maṣdaran li-l-maʿrifa wa-l-ḥaḍāra*, 4th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2005), 91–93.

25. In private letters dating from the 1950s, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim described the rotation of the earth as a lie. See Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Āl al-Shaykh, *Fatāwā wa rasāʾil*, ed. Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim (Mecca: Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥukūma, 1979), 13:107, 211.
26. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Bāz, *al-Adilla al-naqliyya wa-l-ḥissiyya ʿalā imkān al-ṣuʿūd ilā kawākib wa ʿalā jarayān al-shams wa-l-qamar wa sukūn al-arḍ*, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Riyāḍ al-Ḥadītha, 1982), 23.
27. See the original letter in Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Mūsā and Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥamad, eds., *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala bayna al-shaykh Ibn Bāz wa-l-ʿulamāʾ* (Riyadh: Dār Ibn Khuzayma, 2007), 318.
28. Abraham Cressy Morrison, *Man Does Not Stand Alone* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1944), 15–17.
29. al-Mūsā and al-Ḥamad, *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala*, 318–21. This comes from two letters that al-Hilali wrote to Ibn Baz in June and July of 1968.
30. One example is Carroll Lane Fenton, *Our Amazing Earth* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1953), 2.
31. Ibn Bāz, *al-Adilla al-naqliyya*, 23.
32. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Dawāʾ al-shākkīn wa qāmiʿ al-mushakkikīn* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), 60–61.
33. In addition to teaching, al-Hilali served on the university's administrative council (*al-majlis al-idārī*) for several years. See *al-Furqān* 4, no. 10 (1987): 7.
34. In 1977, al-Hilali published a grandiloquent ode to Ibn Baz in the journal of the Salafiyya University in Benares, India. The poem was jarring enough that Ibn Baz replied with an open letter in which he reprimanded al-Hilali for having carried his praise too far and blamed the journal's editors for publishing the ode in the first place. Both documents are reprinted in Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Mūsā, *Jawānib min sīrat al-imām ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Bāz* (Riyadh: Dār Ibn Khuzayma, 2002), 137–41.
35. See the laudatory articles by Ahmad ibn Shaqrun, former dean of the faculty of *sharīʿa* at the Qarawiyyin in Fes, about the Ashʿari creed, al-Ghazali, and Sufism in *Majallat kulliyat al-sharīʿa* 15 (1984): 5–8; and *Majallat kulliyat al-sharīʿa* 18 (1985): 5–8.
36. Muḥammad ibn Saʿd al-Shūwayʿir, "al-Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, 1311–1407," http://www.al-jazirah.com/2008/20080321/ar3.htm (accessed 06/17/2014); ʿAbd al-Kabīr al-Mudaghgharī, *al-Ḥukūma al-multaḥiyya: dirāsa naqdiyya mustaqbaliyya* (Rabat: Dār al-Amān, 2006), 63–64.
37. See the editor's comments in Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Sabīl al-rashād fī hadī khayr al-ʿibād*, ed. Mashhūr ibn Ḥasan Āl Salmān (Amman: al-Dār al-Athariyya, 2006), 1:79. This is a third, commented edition of al-Hilali's exegesis published in Jordan. It has been considerably augmented and should not be confused with the Moroccan edition of 1979–1980.

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38. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Sabīl al-rashād* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1979), 1:5. The majority of purist Salafi scholars reject the existence of a fourth type of *tawḥīd.*
39. Ibid., 1:55.
40. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Hadīyat al-hādiyya ilā al-ṭāʾifa al-tijāniyya* (n.p.: n.p., 1973), 10–11.
41. al-Hilālī, *Sabīl al-rashād fī hadī khayr al-ʿibād*, 1:381, 517.
42. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Ḥukm tārik al-ṣalāt ʿamdan ḥattā yakhruju waqtuhā* (n.p.: n.p., 1982), 36–37.
43. al-Hilālī, *Ṣiyānat al-ʿirḍ*, 30–31.
44. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Bayān al-fajr al-ṣādiq* (Casablanca: n.p., n.d.); Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Iʿlām al-khāṣṣ wa-l-ʿāmm bi-buṭlān al-rakʿa li-man fātatḥu al-fātiḥa wa-l-qiyām* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1982); Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Jaysh al-jarrār min aḥādīth al-nabī al-mukhtār fī anna al-rubāʿiyya rakʿatān fī jamīʿ al-asfār* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1981); Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Sirāj al-munīr fī tanbīh Jamāʿat al-Tablīgh ʿalā akhṭāʾihim* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1979).
45. al-Hilālī, *Ṣiyānat al-ʿirḍ*, 16.
46. al-Shūwayʿir, "al-Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī." See also Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl, *Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī kamā ʿaraftuhu: masār ḥayātihi al-fikriyya wa-l-waṭaniyya wa-l-adabiyya* (Rabat: Éditions IDGL, 2011), 7; Muḥammad Ḍarīf, *al-Islām al-siyāsī fī-l-Maghrib: muqāraba wathāʾiqiyya* (Casablanca: Manshūrāt al-Majalla al-Maghribiyya li-ʿIlm al-Ijtimāʿ al-Siyāsī, 1992), 137.
47. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Minḥat al-kabīr al-mutaʿālī fī shiʿr wa akhbār Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī*, ed. Mashhūr ibn Ḥasan Āl Salmān (Amman: al-Dār al-Athariyya, 2010), 147.
48. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 38–39.
49. ʿAbdul-ʿAziz bin ʿAbdullah bin Baz, Muhammad bin Salih Al-ʿUthaimin, and ʿAbdullah bin ʿAbdur-Rahman Al-Jibreen, *Fatawa Islamiyah: Islamic Verdicts*, ed. Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Musnad (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2001), 7:385–86.
50. This organization originated in 1969 under the guidance of ʿAbd al-Karim Mutiʿ. It gained legal recognition in 1972 but possessed a clandestine radical branch. It disintegrated in December 1975 as a result of the Moroccan regime's crackdown on Islamists. Today, the refurbished version of the Shabiba is affiliated with al-Ḥaraka al-Islāmiyya al-Maghribiyya (the Moroccan Islamic Movement), the umbrella movement whose guide is none other than Mutiʿ himself. See www.elharakah.com and www.achabibah.com (accessed 06/17/2014).
51. ʿUmar Wajāj Ayt Mūsā, "ʿAlā hāmish al-taʿdīlāt al-akhīra fī-l-ajhiza al-amaniyya," www.mafhoum.com/press5/156S61.htm (accessed 06/17/2014).
52. At the time, the refurbished Shabiba sought to settle old scores by targeting various Islamist figures and accusing them of treason to the cause of political Islam in Morocco. Thus, the communiqué targets other Islamists and former members of the Shabiba, including Saʿd al-Din al-ʿUthmani, the former leader of the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development (PJD).

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53. See the private letters written by al-Hilali and Ibn Baz between July 1975 and June 1984 in al-Mūsā and al-Ḥamad, *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala*, 322–63.
54. See www.maghrawi.net (accessed 06/20/2014). Displayed on this website is a scanned copy of a 1997 letter of support issued by the office of the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia. In that letter, Ibn Baz vouches for al-Maghrawi and his association and attests to the purity of his creed. For details, see ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Abū al-Lawz, *al-Ḥarakāt al-salafiyya fī-l-Maghrib (1971–2004): baḥth anthrūbūlūjī sūsiyūlūjī* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2009), 219–28.
55. al-Mūsā and al-Ḥamad, *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala*, 357.
56. Abū al-Faḍl, *Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī*, 23.
57. I have personally heard this derogatory nickname from various individuals in Rabat, Salé, and Casablanca.
58. William E. Shepard, "Islam and Ideology: Towards a Typology," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987): 308.
59. Stéphane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, trans. George Holoc (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 51–78.
60. Shādī ibn Muḥammad Āl Nuʿmān, ed., *Jāmiʿ turāth al-ʿallāma al-Albānī fī-l-manhaj wa-l-aḥdāth al-kubrā* (Sanaa: Markaz al-Nuʿmān li-l-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 2011), 1:296, 322, 338, 427, 2:107, 116–17, 9:147, 483.
61. Ḥusām Tammām, *Tasalluf al-ikhwān: taʾākul al-uṭrūḥa al-ikhwāniyya wa ṣuʿūd al-salafiyya fī jamāʿat al-ikhwān al-muslimīn* (Alexandria: Maktabat al-Iskandariyya, 2010). For the complex relationship between contemporary Egyptian Salafis and the legacy of Sayyid Qutb, see Richard Gauvain, *Salafi Ritual Purity: In the Presence of God* (London: Routledge, 2013), 37–47.
62. Ḥusām Tammām, "Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī: baʿth wa tajdīd al-salafiyya falsafiyyan," www.onislam.net/arabic/islamyoon/salafists/95743–2003–08–02%2000–00–00.html (accessed 06/29/2014). See also the third part of Hilmi's interview with Nājiḥ Ibrāhīm, "al-Liqāʾ al-ʿusbūʿī," www.egyig.com/Public/articles/interview/11/57413881.shtml (accessed 06/29/2014). Mustafa Hilmi must not be confused with Muhammad Mustafa Hilmi, the Egyptian philosopher who died in 1969.
63. Ḥusām Tammām, "Muḥammad Rashād Ghānim: madrasa salafiyya fī maḥall antīkāt," www.onislam.net/arabic/islamyoon/salafists/119470–2007–06–27%2017–02–54.html (accessed 06/29/2014).
64. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *Niẓām al-khilāfa fī-l-fikr al-islāmī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), 4–6.
65. Ibid., 28–30.
66. ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār, *Manāhij al-baḥth ʿinda mufakkirī al-islām* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʿArabiyya, 1984), 6–12. The book was originally published in 1947 and has been reedited many times.
67. Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 54.

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68. See the detailed explanations of William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of* Social Justice in Islam (Leiden: Brill, 1996), xlvi–xlvii.
69. There are countless examples in Muḥammad Quṭb, *Manāhij al-tarbiyya al-islāmiyya*, 14th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993), which was originally published in the 1960s. See also Muḥammad Quṭb, *Mafāhim yanbaghī an tuṣaḥḥaḥ*, 8th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1994), 367–79.
70. Hanrī Lāwūst, *Naẓariyāt shaykh al-islām Ibn Taymiyya fī-l-siyāsa wa-l-ijtimāʿ*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, trans. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm ʿAlī (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1976), 1:7–126, 2:5–61.
71. The enlarged reedition was first published in 1991 by Dār al-Daʿwa, the Muslim Brotherhood's press in Alexandria.
72. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *Qawāʿid al-manhaj al-salafī fī-l-fikr al-islāmī: buḥūth fī-l-ʿaqīda al-islāmiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005), 150. The original 1976 version of the book had a somewhat different title.
73. Ibid., 160–61.
74. Ibid., 176.
75. Ibid., 178, 181.
76. These references can be seen in the 1976 version. Lāwūst, *Naẓariyāt*, 1:48, 50.
77. Ibid., 1:27, 2:12; Ḥilmī, *Qawāʿid*, 161, 178.
78. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *al-Salafiyya bayna al-ʿaqīda al-islāmiyya wa-l-falsafa al-gharbiyya*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria: Dār al-Daʿwa, 1991), 9.
79. Arnūld Tūynbī, *Mukhtaṣar Dirāsa li-l-tārīkh*, trans. Fuʾād Muḥammad Shibl (Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1961), 2:451–53. In chapter 3, we have seen that Toynbee's work may have influenced Egyptian intellectual ʿAbbas Mahmud al-ʿAqqad, who also used *mustaqbaliyya* and *salafiyya* as two generic categories meaning "forward-looking" and "backward-looking." Hilmi cites the piece in which al-ʿAqqad used *salafiyya* in that sense. See Ḥilmī, *al-Salafiyya*, 26.
80. Yūsuf Karam, *Tārīkh al-falsafa al-ḥadītha* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1949), 292.
81. Ḥilmī, *al-Salafiyya*, 28–30.
82. Ibid., 8, 193, 221.
83. The dialogue can be heard at www.fatawa-alalbany.com/aquida_tawheed/hn%2809_13.rm%29.html (accessed 07/06/2014). The conversation is not dated.
84. Āl Nuʿmān, *Jāmiʿ*, 2:17, 32–33, 3:22–24, 41.
85. Ibid., 3:358.
86. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Tamām al-minna fī taʿlīq ʿalā "Fiqh al-sunna*," 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1988), 255. I was unable to locate the rare first edition, which was written in the 1950s.
87. *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928): 144.
88. See the Foundation's page dedicated to Hilmi at http://kfip.org/ar/dr-mustafa-m-hilmi-suliman/ (accessed 07/09/2014).
89. Hilmi remains influential among the Salafis of Alexandria and is held in high esteem by Muhammad Ismaʿil al-Muqaddam (b. 1952), one of the founders of the association al-Daʿwa al-Salafiyya (the Salafi Call). Other scholars who borrowed from

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Hilmi (and whose works are listed in the bibliography) include ʿAlāʾ Bakr, al-Ṭayyib ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Ḥusayn, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd al-Zanaydī, and Mufraḥ ibn Sulaymān al-Qawsī. Also noteworthy are ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ṣāliḥ Maḥmūd, *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyya min al-ashāʿira* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1995), 1:41, 59, 69; and ʿAbdallāh ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ṭarīqī, *al-Madāris al-salafiyya al-muʿāṣira* (n.p.: n.p., 2010), 5–6. Both are Saudi religious scholars who teach at the Imam Muhammad ibn Saʿud University in Riyadh.

90. Muḥammad Khalīl Harrās, *al-Ḥaraka al-wahhābiyya: radd ʿalā maqāl li-l-duktūr Muḥammad al-Bahī fī naqd al-wahhābiyya* (n.p.: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 31–32.
91. Āl Nuʿmān, *Jāmiʿ*, 2:434.
92. Ibid., 3:22, 41.
93. Ibid., 3:438.
94. ʿUmar ibn Maḥmūd Abū ʿUmar [Abu Qatāda al-Filasṭīnī], *al-Jihād wa-l-ijtihād: taʾammulāt fi-l-manhaj* (Amman: Dār al-Bayāriq, 1999), 218. See also the editor's comments in Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Maʿālim al-manhaj al-salafī fi-l-taghyīr*, ed. Salīm al-Hilālī (Cairo: Dār al-Imām Aḥmad, 2006), 24–25.
95. See the 2003 statement by Sadiq al-Karkhi at http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=whr6miky (accessed 07/11/2014). For a useful analysis of these questions, see Joas Wagemakers, *A Quiestist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
96. al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, 82–83.
97. Daniel Lav, *Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 51–52.
98. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAqīl, *Min aʿlām al-ḥaraka wa-l-daʿwa al-islāmiyya al-muʿāṣira* (Kuwait City: Maktabat al-Manār al-Islāmiyya, 2001), 489.
99. Some of these students eventually broke with the movement. While Masʿud ʿAlam al-Nadwi died in 1954 and did not witness many of the changes that later affected the Jamaʿat-i Islami, Abu al-Hasan ʿAli al-Nadwi distanced himself from the organization in the 1960s and criticized the thought of al-Mawdudi. See Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 119.
100. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 18, no. 2 (1977): 41–44. Al-Hilali had already published the same article (with only minor differences) under the same title and in the same journal a few years earlier, at the time of his stay in Medina. He simply resubmitted it.
101. Interview with Shakib Rammal in Bilāl Talīdī, *Dhākira al-ḥaraka al-islāmiyya al-maghribiyya* (Rabat: Ṭūb Brīs, 2010), 4:134–35.
102. Interview with the late ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Bumarat in Bilāl Talīdī, *Dhākira al-ḥaraka al-islāmiyya al-maghribiyya* (Rabat: Ṭūb Brīs, 2008), 1:67.
103. Malika Zeghal, *Les islamistes marocains: le défi à la monarchie* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), 198–99.
104. See ʿAbdlāwī al-Khilāfa, "Ḥiwār maʿa al-dāʿiyya al-maghribī faḍīlat al-shaykh Muḥammad Zuḥal," *al-Bayān* 17, no. 174 (2002). Available online in the archives of www.midad.com (accessed 07/13/2014).
105. ʿAbd al-Salām Yāsīn, *al-Iḥsān* (Casablanca: Maṭbūʿāt al-Ufuq, 1998), 8.

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106. Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Dhū al-Fiqār, *Mashāyikh al-ṣūfiyya: al-inḥirāf al-tarbawī wa-l-fasād al-ʿaqadī* (Rabat: Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Dhū al-Fiqār, 2004), 132. In a 1977 letter to Ibn Baz, al-Hilali mentions that he prepared a poem in *nūn* against a Moroccan Sufi of the Butshishi order—most likely a reference to Yasin. See al-Mūsā and al-Ḥamad, *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala*, 331.
107. See al-Hilali's comments in Maḥmūd Saʿd Nāṣiḥ, *Mawqif al-Khumaynī min al-shīʿa wa-l-tashayyuʿ*, ed. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī (Kuwait City: Dār al-Nashr al-Salafiyya, n.d.), 3–5, 37–46. In the 1980s, al-Hilali made this annotated booklet available in Morocco at the suggestion of Kuwaiti Salafis who subsidized its distribution. It was written and published in the Arab East, but this particular edition was printed in Casablanca.
108. *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq* 18, nos. 7–8 (1977): 15–21.
109. al-Mūsā and al-Ḥamad, *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala*, 363.

Conclusion

1. Muhammad Abu Zahra, *The Four Imams: Their Lives, Works, and Their Schools of Thought*, 2nd ed., trans. Aisha Bewley (London: Dar al-Taqwa, 2005), 56.
2. Aḥmad al-Raysūnī, *al-Ḥaraka al-islāmiyya al-maghribiyya: ṣuʿūd am ufūl?* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 2004), 24.
3. Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: Norton, 2006), 103.
4. Josephine van den Bent, "'We Are Always the Ones Paying for the Drinks': Egypt's Salafyo Costa as a Post-Salafist Horizontalist Social Movement Organisation" (master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2012), 36–38.
5. Mohammed Turki Al-Sudairi, "Saudi Influences on the Development of Chinese Salafism" (master's thesis, University of Hong Kong, 2014), 52.

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